SEE-SAW.

SEE-SAW;

A Novel.

BY FRANCESCO ABATI.

EDITED BY

W. WINWOOD READE.

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PREFACE.

AMICO MIO,—I shall be happy to edit your work, and to accept all the responsibilities which may happen to be attached to that arduous charge. You ask me to give you a frank opinion, and I will tell you at once that I think you will displease the English mind. I pass over the time-honoured jests about our invisible suns and greasy moons, and our dulness in conversation, and the domestic slavery of our wives. But throughout the book you continually praise the Roman Catholic and jeer at the Protestant religion; you have carefully selected whatever there is of poetry and refinement in the one, and opposed to it whatever there is of narrowness and bigotry in the other. For instance, you ridicule the ignorance of our provincial clergymen, and of their parishioners. But you say

nothing of adult schools, and similar institutions, in which clergymen are frequently the sole imparters of secular knowledge, while in Italy the priests endeavour only to retain the masses in their ignorance. You laugh at the absurd notions which many educated people have about the Jesuits; but is there nothing to be said on the other side? Can you find among us a lady of refinement and rank like the Marchesa * * *, who said to me at Florence, that the Catholics had one consolation in trouble which Protestants could never feel. They believed in a future life.

I see, too, that you have fallen into the fatal mistake of describing human beings as they are. Now that will never do. We may not be a moral, but at least we are a decent people. We condemn all portrayment of passion or dissection of vice in books. We consider that the mind, like the body, has its brutish instincts which it cannot wholly repress, and of which it is indelicate to speak: that Society has its sores, which it is clumsy to expose. In England we do not yet dare to call things by their right names, nor even to proclaim that they exist. You will say that this

is vile hypocrisy, no doubt; but, after all, a little hypocrisy is essential to the proprieties of life, and a great deal is required for success in literature.

Yours,

W. WINWOOD READE.

CONSERVATIVE CLUB.

REPLY.

AM I tailor of thoughts that I must fit and fashion them to English tastes? I admire this nation, stubborn in its energies, profound in its knowledge, glorious in its freedom; but I detest its cant of mock virtues, its prim pruderies, and its dismal Sabbaths. I will never consent to conceal what I see, or what I think.

I thank you for editing this sketch—a chapter chosen at random from a history written in my brain—the more so, as I see that it must inevitably fail.

When I first began to understand the mysteries of my art, I saw that it required a long apprenticeship: that the hand must be gradually

trained to obey the head, and that ideas require soil in proportion to their size. I determined to plant oaks, and saw that I must accumulate a mountain of mould. For years I laboured thus: studying all branches of human learning, and examining deeply the nature of man.

Then, as prisoners lust for liberty, and, maddened by the distant sky, or by the sounds of free men from afar, make wild and abortive efforts to escape, so I, panting for fame, have thoughtlessly rushed forth to be laughed at by a gaping crowd, hissed, dragged back, ironed by my own will, and the term of my self-imprisonment prolonged.

I return, then, to my nameless solitude: when I come forth again I shall succeed.

FRANCESCO ABATI.

At Sea.

SEE-SAW.

CHAPTER I.

THE Porta San Miniato is not the most beautiful of the seven gates of Florence. Seen from without, it is simply an arched opening in a high and dingy wall, the crevices of which are patched up with fresh mortar, or choked with weeds. Within, two heavy doors, swung back upon their hinges, resemble those of a jail; black and thickly-matted cobwebs hang down from dirty rafters; and on the walls are suspended scales, with other implements of the *octroi*, which two officials, seated on round stools, levy upon all eatables, drinkables, &c., imported into the town.

On a certain morning in December, not many

years ago, this business was being transacted more speedily and silently than usual. The *octroi* men did not harangue; the market people did not expostulate; for the *tramontana* was blowing, and even Florentines will not chatter in the teeth of this cutting wind. Half-a-dozen persons, however, had grouped themselves under the gate, the men smoking their bitter Tuscan cigars, the women holding in their hands small earthenware pots, filled with lighted braise. This gate was their club-door, from which they criticised fresh arrivals, and exchanged salutations with their country friends.

They were all looking up the hill, at the top of which the church of San Miniato peers over an olive grove. Something in a cloak was coming down the road; when it passed under the gate, every mouth became crescent with a grin. It was an old man, who, naturally short of stature, had made himself dwarfish by crouching to the cold; his face was of a bluish-grey, excepting the tip of his nose, which was vermilion; his teeth chattered audibly; and his feet descended with hesitation on the frozen ground. He was followed by a dozen twinkling eyes to the corner of the Borgo San Niccolo, where a violent

gust of wind, having opened all the windows in the street, caught him under his cloak, and rolled him over on his back. The loud roar of laughter reached his ears, for as he rose he looked back at them with eyes which seemed to spout forth fire. "*Dio mio!*" they cried, becoming suddenly frightened; "what a look!" And one woman made the sign of the cross over her child, to protect it from the Evil Eye.

The old man crossed the Ponte Vecchio, where the shops gave him a brief shelter, and entered fashionable Florence. At the corner of the Via Larga (now the Via Cavour) he found a stall laid out with slabs of hot chestnut-bread for sale. A minute copper coin, which his fingers secured with some difficulty in the corner of a pocket, bought him one of these. He warmed his hands with it first, and then ate it. "*Ecco!*" said he, "one can move one's lips now. Have the kindness to tell me, *amico mio*, where I shall find the house of the Marchese dei Lorini."

"I shall have the greatest pleasure in directing you," replied the other. "The Marchese lives on the *piano nobile*, number 93."

Having interchanged a profusion of compliments and bows, the one turned to a customer, the other walked quickly along the street, his head lowered to the blast.

On arriving at the house, he found the outer door open, but behind it there was a handsome iron gate; on the right-hand side of it a scroll-shaped piece of marble, from which protruded three bell-handles, belonging to the first, second, and third floors. He pulled the one under which *primo piano* was inscribed; a rasping sound was heard, and the gate was opened without hands. He mounted a broad staircase to the first floor; there he found on his left a massive nail-studded door, with a brass-plate in its centre, bearing the name *Lorini*. Above this plate was a little wicket, and at the side of the door, another bell. The bell was answered by a voice which demanded, "*Chi è?*" and by an eye which appeared at the wicket.

"*Amici*," replied the man, and was admitted. A servant in drab and scarlet livery stood upon the threshold.

"The Signor Marchese, is he visible?"

"I will go and see, signor; and the name?"

"My name is Jacopo Restoni. I have not the honour of being acquainted with the Marchese; but have the kindness to tell him that I come upon business of extreme importance."

The valet introduced him into a miniature hall, pointed to a marble bench, and disappeared through another door. The man in the cloak sat down upon the bench, and listened to the muffled sound of a piano, which presently ceased. The servant was delivering his message. He sprang from his seat and walked nervously to and fro.

"If he will not see me!" he muttered to himself. The door opened at that moment, and the servant gestured to him to come in. He glided placidly to the door, but on the threshold he abruptly stopped.

In Florence it is not the fashion to be warm. Coal is inaccessible, and wood is dear. The grates are small and smoky: the rooms airy and vast. Every one knows the story of the Russian Czar, who went shivering from place to place, exclaiming that in Russia one saw the cold, but that in Florence one felt it.

But the Marchese, who had a genius for luxury

(which rich Englishmen call comfort), had caused his apartments to be heated with hot-air pipes. This is an admirable arrangement of caloric. If you go into a room with an English fire blazing at one end of it, you thaw down unequally; your hands travel to the tropics, while your feet remain at the North Pole. While to enter a pipe-heated room is to glide into a warm-air bath; the muscles softly expand; the skin from parchment becomes satin; the blood ripples gaily through the veins; you melt from shrivelled semi-petrifaction into luscious Oriental languor.

The poor man in the cloak was for a moment benumbed, as it were, by heat. This unknown atmosphere acted like a drug upon his brain; and he was dazzled by the wealth which glittered upon him from every side. His eyes wandered stupidly round, seeing everything, but mastering no details.

These details would have charmed a connoisseur. The pen can but faintly portray them, and descriptions of furniture usually resemble *catalogues raissonées.* Like catalogues, however, though dull reading, they are sometimes indispensable.

It was a large room, lighted by two windows which opened out on a terrace. Crimson curtains drooped down from gold cornices. On the walls, which were of a pale sage-green, hung several paintings in richly carved frames, with under each a *stemma*, on which was written the painter's name. They were all from the studios of modern artists: an historical painting by Ussi; *genre* pictures by Altamura, Morelli, and Tedesco; a landscape by Zamboni; and two charming groups of animals by Palizi, the only Italian of the present day who excels in that branch of the art. Some statuettes by Fedi smiled out from niches in the walls, and between these were chandeliers with crystal drops.

The ceiling was laid off in the well-known rose pattern, after the Maria Maggiore at Rome, viz., hollow squares, formed by longitudinal and transverse beams; in the centre of each square a gold rosette.

A Turkey carpet, on a black marble floor; rose-coloured divans round the walls; cross-legged chairs of ancient wood, carved into marvellous designs; and Florentine mosaics and cinque-cento bric-à-brac;

finally, a grand piano from Vienna, upon which laid a pile of music and a violin, and before which was seated Eugenio, Marchese dei Lorini.

He was a very young man, with effeminate, almost feminine features; a small black moustache, no whiskers, transparent complexion, a rounded forehead (indicative of musical genius), full lips, and hands plump (voluptuary and *bon vivant*), dress elegant, manners indolent, but graceful and refined. It could be seen at the first glance that this was a man of pleasure; but there was much that was contradictory in the characters of his face. One felt, on observing him closely, that there was a fire slumbering within those eyes, a brain pulsating beneath that curled and perfumed hair.

He glanced carelessly at Restoni as he entered, presupposing that he belonged to the ruffiano class. At Florence business of extreme importance has usually something to do with women. Then perceiving by his peasant dress that he could be no messenger of town intrigue, he observed him more narrowly. He saw a face which, having recovered its natural hue, was sallow, and seamed with long, deep wrinkles—scars of a misfortune or a vice. His

low depressed forehead denoted a narrow but energetic mind. His under lip protruded, and his eyes were of that cat-green colour which, not uncommon among women, is so rarely found in men. His hands were thin, and his fingers long and hooked, resembling the talons of a bird of prey.

The Marchese found this man so *antipático* that he determined to refuse him whatever he might have come to request, and to dismiss him from his presence as soon as he could. But the evil have their special providence. As the wolf, the kite, and the shark have been endowed with certain qualities which enable them successfully to prey, so Restoni had been blessed with a soft and insinuating voice, and with manners which were exquisite even among the Tuscans—the best mannered people in the world. Before they had finished their conversation, Lorini no longer saw the face which was before him. All his senses had been drawn into his ears.

"I have the honour of addressing il Signor Marchese dei Lorini?" he asked, bowing.

The Marchese bent his head.

"Will he pardon me if I confess that I have come

to ask his advice about a matter which relates purely to myself?"

"If my advice can be of use, galantuomo, I shall be happy to give it to you."

"The advice of the Signor Marchese will be of the utmost assistance to me in this matter. I should not have presumed to trouble him were he not the only signor in whose opinion I can thoroughly confide."

"You do me too much honour."

"The signor says that I do him too much honour. He does not know that this matter of which I speak is connected with the noble art of music. It is to him, then, that I come—to him whose genius is known throughout Tuscany—what do I say?—throughout Italy, throughout the world."

"I had supposed," said Lorini, smiling, "that my humble reputation had been bounded by the walls of Florence. However, what is it that you wish to ask me?"

"Signore, I have a daughter. She is seventeen years of age. She is beautiful as an angel, and her voice—Dio! what a voice she has! It is of that which I wish to speak."

"Emph!"

"The Signor Marchese would perhaps consent to hear her sing?"

"You think, I suppose, of cultivating her voice for the stage?"

"If the opinion of the Signor Marchese should encourage me to do so. Her voice is a soprano of remarkable compass and metallo."

"My galantuomo, something more than a voice is required to make a prima donna. I have known contadine with magnificent voices, but who could never become singers."

"The Signor Marchese is right. It is almost impossible for a contadina to become a singer; but he must know that I am not a contadino, though I wear a peasant's dress. Signore, I was once a citizen of Florence. I had sufficient means, and I had a charming and accomplished spouse, the mother of this child. She sang divinely, but I would not allow her to go upon the stage. I was a miser of her charms. I could not bear that any one should admire them except myself. But when I found that our child had inherited her voice, I consented that she, the little one, should be educated for the boards. My wife her-

self trained her first trembling notes. She sent her to the school where she learnt the French and English tongues; and then——ah then, signor, misfortune came upon us. Death first—my poor wife died—and then poverty—my money was taken too. One whom I thought my friend—but no, I will not fatigue the signor with a history so long and sad. Suffice to say that I became, through no fault of my own, a ruined man. But heaven has at length rewarded me for the patience with which I endured these trials. My daughter has a voice which could have come from heaven only; but the signor shall judge for himself."

"*Ma scusa,*" said Lorini; "I have too often consented to interviews which have given needless trouble to both parties, and which have cruelly disappointed the young aspirant herself. One can hardly judge of one's own daughter's voice, and the contadine cannot judge at all. Induce some competent person to hear your daughter sing; and if he advises you to bring her to me, do so, and I will listen to her with the greatest pleasure."

"It is precisely for that reason that I have come to the Signor Marchese," said Restoni, forgetting

that he had previously given a more flattering one; "Signor Vivaldi, the *poeta* of the Pergola, was passing my cottage near to San Miniato; my girl happened to be singing; he rushed in wild with excitement; 'This voice must not remain untilled,' he said; 'take her to the Marchese dei Lorini, and he will advise you what to do.'"

"Oh, very well," said Lorini, rising; "then bring her to me at twelve o'clock to-morrow." Restoni expressed his gratitude in a long and elegant speech.

Lorini went into his chamber, followed by his valet. The scene presented during the next half-hour was very typical of my hero's character. He was sitting in an easy chair, having his hair curled, and reading the score of a new opera; sometimes he glanced into the glass; sometimes he looked up at the painted ceiling in chase of an idea, and having caught it, scribbled it down upon the margin of the book. It was thus he spent his life before that great looking-glass which is called Society, sometimes snatching a moment to take Art into his lap.

The genius of music blossoms more quickly than any of her sisters. Eugenio had beaten time with

his baby's rattle to the lullaby his nurse sang to him; at six years of age he was considered a prodigy as a pianist: at twelve, he began to compose. Placed by his guardians (for he was an orphan) under a strict *maestro*, he was thoroughly grounded in counterpoint, and carried off every prize at the Florentine Institute of Music. While yet a minor he had written cantate, symphonies, concerti, romanze; every one predicted that he would become a national composer. But after he had obtained his liberty and entered the world, he appeared to make no further progress. As is often the case with those who gain a precocious reputation, he became indolent and apathetic. He published nothing; he affected to sneer at public fame; he made use of his great talent as a mere weapon in society. It was, in fact, society which prevented that talent from rising into genius; it was society who, with her petty flatteries and pleasures, decoyed him from those long and solitary labours which alone can conquer glory; she was the Delilah who laid his head upon her silken lap, and shaved off his locks before they could grow long.

However, Eugenio did not sink into that horrible

tribe of young men who infest the Cascino and the Piazza St. Trinita in glaring morning coats and gaudy cravats and tightly-fitting trousers, like English grooms out of livery; who have intrigues with the *ballerine* at the Pergola, or with the French actresses at the Nicolini; who spend their days in idleness and vulgar vice, their nights at the Jockey Club over green cloth and cards. He preserved an intimacy with the old Florentine families—a caste to which he belonged.

The Lorini had been distinguished in the middle ages; their genealogical tree was ancient, and had once borne noble fruit. There had been six Gonfaloniere among them. Their arms were azure, six mountains, in pyramid, proper: on a chief or, four trees vert. He was the last of his family, and the whole estate was therefore his: a villa, with extensive vineyards, olive orchards, corn fields, and still more extensive waste lands, and of course an ancient palazzo, which he let, preferring the modern life of the Via Cavour. He mingled sometimes in the artist world of Florence, but on the whole associated but little with men. He was of those who, possessing much that is feminine

in their nature, love to be with women, as one sometimes sees a young stag herding with the hinds. The mere sound of women's voices, the rustle of their dresses, gave him a pleasure which few of the antlered sex can understand. He loved to breathe in a female atmosphere. He had a sense for that delicate perfume which arises from women's minds, while most men care only for those feminine flowers which they can wither with their touch or wear in their button-holes before the world.

He had never experienced a *grande passion.* He had begun life, like most young poets, by looking for angels in drawing-rooms, and finding only women, became discontented and disbelieving. From idolator he turned infidel, and sometimes blasphemed. "I frittered away my boyhood," he would say, "in looking for a perfect woman. I have abandoned that chimera, and I imitate the artists. If one of them wishes to paint a Venus, he takes an arm from one model, a bust from another, a pair of eyes from a third. So I love one woman a little because she is beautiful, another because she is witty, a third because she is *galante,* etc. Thus I create an image in my brain, and worship it as Pygmalion wor-

shipped his statue of stone, but with much less chance of its ever taking life."

And so Lorini's heart had never been a despot's slave; it was a calm, obedient, and loving state, which dwelt beneath the empire of women, but which, never having suffered tyranny, had never learnt to rebel. It was ruled over by a representative body of the other sex, varying in number, though not to any great degree. And as in all other commonwealths, there was one who presided at their head, who exercised a limited monarchy over the property in question, and who was always liable to be supplanted by some other candidate.

The reigning beauty at the present time was Olga Sackowsky, a Russian baroness of great beauty and wealth. She had come to Florence at the beginning of the winter, bringing with her a little daughter of five years of age (though she said that it was three). Her husband was a distinguished general in the Imperial army, campaigning in the Caucasus.

As soon as she was established in her palazzo she was laid siege to by the Florentines, who infuse into their love-affairs a patience and an ardour which, reserved for the arts and sciences, would render them

the most illustrious nation upon earth. But our genius was ever of a military kind. The ancient Italians conquered all the men in the world. We conquer all the women. Which is the nobler and more difficult task? And what is this twaddle about the degeneration of our country?

They spent days and nights beneath her windows; they wrote reams of three-cornered *billet-doux;* they curvetted round her when she drove out, like a squadron of light-horse; at the opera a hundred double-barrelled glasses were levelled at her—but in vain. Horse, foot, artillery, all recoiled from the beleaguered heart, and pronounced it to be impregnable.

There is a house near the Barbano where lived at that time the Signora Pinsuti, a lady who had preserved all the coquetry and lost all the charms of youth. For some years she had been the stock-piece of scandal in Florence; but age having robbed her of her lovers and her notoriety, she was forced to set up a scandal-mongery, that she might not be quite lost sight of by society. On the old principle of the worst poacher making the best gamekeeper, she was admirably fitted for such an office, and could

always flush something for her friends to have a shot at. Having a fine body of "night-watchers," she knew all that went on in Florence, and, having a libellous imagination, a good deal that did not. Lorini, as it may be supposed, was quite a little mine for her; and one day she lighted on a new view. She discovered that he who had studiously shunned the Baroness on her first arrival now paid his visits *senza suggezione.* The inference which she drew from this was uncharitable; the reader is entreated not to share it: Florence unfortunately did.

When the valet had arranged his master's hair, he brought him his hat, his slate-coloured gloves, and a pelise trimmed with sable. The Marchese having put them on, and having surveyed himself from different points of view, sauntered down to Doney's.

This *café* is of European repute, and will probably become historical. Insuring distinction by the extravagance of its tariff, it is quite *comme il faut:* great ladies may be seen at its marble-topped tables taking their *consommé* or their ice, according to the time of year. A knot of the *nouvelle jeunesse* are

always standing at the door. In the evening a moderate number of dinners are served; and one may see there those pretty faces which are usually attached to some great name, and which are to be met with at the opera in upper tiers, and at the Cascine in plain carriages. These, however, are but birds of passage; there is really no Demi-monde in Florence—a proof that its men of fashion are virtuous, or that its women are not. Lorini ordered a breakfast with a taste and an attention which reflected credit on his youth. He beckoned to a face which passed the window, and a tall, pale, young man came in; his hair was very long, his dress was slovenly, his movements were abrupt; he held an unlighted cigar between his teeth, and his eyes wandered about him in a vacant manner.

"Good morning, Vivaldi; you are the very man I wished to see. A Jacopo Restoni called on me this morning, and said that you had advised him to bring his daughter to me. Does she sing well?"

"She has a magnificent voice."

"You know, *caro mio*, that it is my dream to bring out a prima donna; to educate an artist and a

voice. But I am tired of trying contadine. You recollect Assunta? her voice embraced the three registers—her trill was a laryngeal marvel. But she sang as a parrot speaks. If I told her to throw fire into her singing, she could only roll her eyes and sing at the top of her voice, which she usually did, by-the-bye. And as for sentiment and expression, she did not understand what they meant. Her voice was as hard as cast-iron: she could work miracles with it in a mechanical way, but she could excite no feeling in her hearers beyond surprise. It was a voice for a physiologist to study, and for a musician to avoid. These girls are all alike: they lead the lives of animals; they have no sorrows; they are ignorant of emotion. The nobler passions are the product of refinement; and refinement is the soul of which education is the body."

"What an oration; but there was Catalani——"

"Who was quite uneducated even in music: that is true; yet, remember, she was no actress."

"This girl is worth hearing, I assure you."

"*Vedremo.* She is coming to me to-morrow. Have you been doing any work lately?"

"Yes; I have had the idea of a new opera. When

I have written some of the libretto you shall see it. I think that it will make me famous."

"What is the subject?"

"It is the story of 'Buondelmonte dei Buondelmonti.' I will give you an idea of the treatment."

"Excellent!" cried Lorini, after he had finished. "You will become a Metastasio."

"And where am I to find a Mozart? Oh, Lorini, why do you not write? You have those varied talents which are required for the music of the stage; no one knows that better than our *impresario*. Let me write this book for you; then consent to seclude yourself from society, and earn glory for Florence and for yourself."

"We will talk of it after the season," said the other; "but to tell the truth, I have not your kind of ambition. I do not care for the mob of the parterre, and for that notoriety which men call fame. I am content to write for the pleasure of some connoisseurs and a few pretty women. Besides, I am too lazy to write an opera. Will you have some coffee?"

"It is very easy," said Vivaldi, losing his temper, "to gain the applause of one's own friends. It may

be cowardice and vanity which prevents you from testing your talents before the world."

"It is more than possible," said Lorini, shrugging his shoulders, "though one's friends in the *beau-monde* are not so good-natured as you seem to suppose. But I have an appointment now—*à rivederci.*"

"He might be a great composer," muttered Vivaldi, "if he had the patience and the courage. But his small mind is satisfied with success in a saloon. Oh, Florence! Florence! has all your strength been exhausted by the gigantic passions of the middle ages? Must our artists ever remain copyists and mere translators! Ah no, the soul of the past still hovers above its beloved city. Let us hope and strive, and she may yet enter within our breasts!"

"He writes good verses," thought Lorini; "but he wears abominable clothes. This comes of manuring one faculty; the rest run to waste—*Pst!*"

A close *fiacre* obeyed the summons, and dived with him into a labyrinth of narrow streets. A stranger would have supposed that he was going into a low neighbourhood. But it is a peculiarity of Florence that it has no unfashionable quarter: in

the oddest corners of this city one falls suddenly upon some grand palazzo still inhabited by a rich and ancient family.

The *fiacre* stopped before a building, which, with its barred windows, frowning *porte-cochère*, and massive walls, resembled a prison rather than a palace. The ancient *palazzi* of Florence were really fortresses, for they had been built in days of domestic faction and street-wars. But such is the senseless servility of fashion, that one sees new houses in Florence being built in hideous imitation of these amateur bastilles.

At an order from the Marchese he was driven under the *porte-cochère*. At the foot of a large marble staircase sat a tall chesnut-haired lacquey in a coat and cape of dark green with his hands in a muff.

"The Baroness Sackowsky?"

"*Passi, Signore,*" said the man, with a broad Scandinavian accent. Lorini mounted the staircase rapidly. The man watched him with a dark brow, told another servant to take his place, and strode up the stairs. In a couple of hours Lorini lounged down the stairs, gloving himself, and smoking a

Russian cigarette. The lacquey came down, sent away the Italian concierge, went into the porter's lodge, unlocked a drawer, took out a ledger, and copied into it a long entry from a note-book which he had taken from his pocket.

The last scene of this chapter shall be in the Cascine. It is a peninsula formed by the Arno and by its tributary the Mugnone. Two parallel roads, divided by a strip of grove and meadow land, in the centre of which is the Royal Dairy, and in front of that building a large open space called, by the Florentine English, Flirtation Square. Here a band plays in the afternoon, and carriages congregate; and here, as in their boxes at the opera, the Florentines receive. Here Nature has provided the best materials for the eloquent and the experienced. The distant Apennines crowned with snow, the villas which speckle the neighbouring hills: the Arno which pours past, flushed with yellow light: the ivy still embracing the oak which has been stripped by winter of its own leaves: the sun-set sky illumined with lovely tints covered with clouds of fantastic forms—all these afford images to disguise a declaration, or adorn a sigh.

There was one carriage which had no cavaliere; it was a shabby-genteel affair, which at first sight one was apt to mistake for a *fiacre*, with a rough-coated, thick-limbed horse, and a man in a thread-bare livery. Therein sat a tall and aquiline-featured woman, with keen and malicious eyes, which wandered incessantly from group to group, scrutinising the expression of every female face. Suddenly they lightened as they saw two carriages approaching from different directions. In the one, a mail phaeton, sat the noble and handsome Lorini, driving his greys with exquisite skill through the chaos of wheels and wings. The other was a barouche, in which lolled a beautiful woman, muffled to the throat with the furs of the sable and the arctic fox: at her side sat a little girl, draped in velvet with a grebe pellerine. When these two passed each other they bowed with a politeness which seemed almost to be studied—perhaps it was. But the Signora Pinsuti, whom nothing could escape, had detected the segment of a smile at the corner of Lorini's lips.

CHAPTER II.

At the summit of the steep wall-lined road which mounts from Florence to San Miniato, Bellosguardo, and beyond, was one of those Madonna shrines which are so common in Tuscany, and which, with wayside crosses and other emblems, supply the place of sacred literature to a people who cannot read.

It was built of stone, hollowed out into a niche in which an oil-lamp swung. The inside of the niche was covered with a fresco of the Mother and the Child. The colours were half effaced, but time had spared the face of the Madonna, which, gentle, pure, and suffering, looked down upon the bustling road, and seemed with her soft eyes to call the passers-by to prayer.

At the foot of this shrine sat a tall dark girl telling her beads, and looking up to the face with lingering, adoring eyes. Soon they swam with

tears, and, as they ran down her face, she said:—"My mother is dead, and Thou art my mother now. I tell everything to Thee; yes, every little feeling that I have, because when I do so it takes a load from off my breast; I do not wish to tell it to the priest, for many say he is a bad man; and my father will not listen to me when I wish to speak to him of such things as these. That is because he is a man. While Thou, Mary, although Thou art the Mother of God Himself, yet Thou art a woman, art Thou not? Oft when I sit here and speak with Thee, I think that I see a smile come round Thy lips; and once, when I was very sad—because of my father and the money he had lost—and lay on the ground there weeping and wailing, I thought that Thy eyes opened, and that large silver, trembling tears poured down Thy cheeks. Oh, Madre mia, how I love Thy sweet and sacred face; how I love those lips which can smile upon me, and those eyes which, in all the joys of Heaven, can yet shed tears for me."

Then she smiled and crept coaxingly closer to the shrine.

"Thou knowest the yearning of my heart. May

it be granted? Oh, Mary, Queen of the Angels, Star of the Morning, Mystical Rose, plead for me with Him, and I will love Thee and worship Thee for evermore."

The sun sank to the brink of the horizon, and turned the dark cypresses purple as it filtered through them with its last rays.

It was the hour of the Ave Maria; the chimes of the city mounted faintly to her ears; and the girl raised her voice and sang:—

> "Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum; benedicta tu inter mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus. Sancta Maria, mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus nunc et in hora mortis nostræ. Amen."

She sat listening to the echoes of her own voice, and then raised her timid eyes as if trembling for the audacity of a prayer, the first perhaps which she had offered up for herself alone. Then she felt a heavy hand upon her shoulder. She turned round with a shudder, startled in the midst of a powerful emotion. But when she saw that it was her father, her face lost its terror, and she flung herself into his arms.

"O, my father, it is you then returned to me in

safety." And she kissed his sallow cheeks. "But, come in-doors. I have a fire of fir-cones and brush-wood laid there. I will make it blaze up in a moment, and then our little room will be so light and warm." So taking one of his hands in hers, she half-led him half-dragged him to the door of a cottage externally superior to the others belonging to contadini grouped around it. The glass panes were all intact, and the dead wall was adorned with an excellent imitation of windows and balcony on a dark wooden ground. Within, however, there was but little to admire; the floor was rudely bricked; a huge bed with heavy curtains monopolised one side of the apartment, there was a small truckle bed under the opposite wall; a chair, a table, and a three-legged stool. There was no staircase: another door opened into a small back yard with a sink for washing, and beyond this was a room which served as a scullery and kitchen.

Into this she vanished for a moment, and returned with some *polenta* (a kind of bread made from Indian corn), a dish of maccaroni sprinkled over with cheese, and a flask of red wine.

The manners of Jacopo Restoni were quite dif-

ferent from those which he had worn in the early part of the day. The fluent, flattering, garrulous, and polite old man had become taciturn and terse. He had effervesced all day: now he was flat, and perhaps a little sour. He scarcely spoke a word till he had finished his meal. Then he rolled his eyes discontentedly round the room, and stamped on the floor till the red dust flew up. "Curse his riches," he cried. "Why should he have soft carpets, and pictures, and glittering glasses, whilst I shiver in a den like this?"

His daughter looked sadly at the fire-place; the brush-wood had burnt away: only a few charred ends and a heap of white ashes remained.

"I have more brains than he has, the empty-headed fool! Yet he is there and I am here. O my cursed luck! How near I was to wealth as great as his. Maddalena (he seized his daughter's wrist), I have tried to win a fortune for thee, and I have failed. But I may yet see thee in thy palazzo. To-day I have eaten dirt for thee, my child."

"Oh, father!"

"Yes, for thee I have lacqueyed myself to this boy whom I despise. But it has not been in vain."

"He will see me?"

"So he condescends to say."

"He will hear me sing?"

"To-morrow; unless his lordship changes his mind."

"O my darling father . . . . and then . . . . "

"Then all depends upon thyself."

"But if—if he does not like my singing?"

"He will not hesitate to tell thee so."

"And I shall have to give up all my hopes?"

"Of becoming a singer—yes."

"Oh, father! then I shall have to give up all my hopes."

Restoni looked down into his daughter's face, and passed his hands thoughtfully through her hair. She imagined that it was from tenderness—poor thing—and caressed him in return.

"How old art thou, Maddalena?"

She looked up into his face. Why did he look at her in that strange way, with eyes which seemed to search her through and through? She did not answer immediately. He repeated the question.

"I am seventeen, father."

"Well, when a girl is seventeen and good-looking,

she may always have her hopes, even if she cannot be a singer."

"Ah! I do not know what hopes those are. I have but one, and it swallows up all my heart."

"My girl, yesterday young Lorenzo, the son of the *fattore*, came in to see thee. I hear the neighbours say that he is courting thee. Dost thou love him?"

"Father, I love him as a friend. But that is all. He asked me to marry him; I told him that I could not; that I was determined to become a singer; that I was betrothed to Art. He was angry and jeered at me, but I was firm."

Restoni again fell into thought.

"Maddalena," he said, "what wert thou doing just now when I was coming up the hill?"

"I was praying to the Virgin."

"Why dost thou pray to her?"

She hesitated a little. "Because the church bids me to?"

"Is that the only reason?"

"Oh, no; my heart bids me as well. I love the Holy Virgin. She listens to all my prayers; she watches over me in my sleep: she is my mother in heaven as you are my father upon earth."

He took her by the hand and led her out before the shrine. It was now night; but the oil-lamp was lighted, and the face shone forth sadder and sweeter even than it did by day.

The moon was high in the heavens; it beamed through the clear dry air with a crystal brightness unknown in northern skies. Even colours could be discerned by this splendid light, which fell upon the earth in broad sheets like the waters of a silver lake.

"Maddalena," said Restoni, in a voice which he rendered tremulous. "I have not been a good father to thee. In trying to make thee rich, I have made thee poor. Dost thou forgive me this misfortune? Canst thou still love me?"

The tender-hearted girl burst into hot tears, and flung her arms passionately round his neck.

"Thanks, dearest. But to-night I am sad: I have a presentiment: to-morrow our lives may be totally changed, and I have a fear—thou wilt laugh at it, perhaps—that thou mayest marry some one who will make thee unhappy; some one whom I do not love, who will separate thee from me, who will ——"

"No, no, never will I marry any one whom you do not love."

"Wilt thou swear it?"

"Yes, father, I will swear it."

"Then kneel," he cried, almost forcing her down, and repeat after me these words:—"I swear, Holy Mother, by Thee——"

"I swear, Holy Mother, by Thee——"

"That I will never marry him whom my father hates——"

"That I will never marry him whom my father hates——"

"And that I will marry him whom my father chooses for me."

"But, father . . ."

"Swear!" he cried.

And trembling, she repeated the words. Then she looked frightened. "Father," she whispered, "you will not choose one for me whom I cannot love."

He smiled and patted her head, and her fears all vanished away. Poor girl! hands can lie as well as tongues, and smiles can be sometimes sneers in disguise.

An hour afterwards Restoni was snoring loudly; but from behind the curtains of the four-post bed came forth rustling sounds, and impatient complain-

ing sighs. Maddalena could not sleep. Those words of her father's were still alive in her ears—*To-morrow our lives may be totally changed.* Her mind, fevered by the mysterious influences of night, flashed with images too wild for thoughts and too distinct for dreams. She saw herself upon the stage, the roar of applause rang loudly in her ears, and yet she was conscious that this vision was but a hope. She tried in vain to calm herself, to drive back the ideas which crowded dimly yet impetuously upon her. At length they turned to memories; and, as an ebb-tide from the sea drives a river-stream towards its source, so her thought-torrent was carried childwards by a flood of feeling from the past.

She thought of her mother, who had died in that cottage—in that very bed. She opened the curtains and sprang out, shuddering; she sat by the window, her white arms crossed upon her breast. Yes, it was there that she had seen her mother's eyes grow glassy, and her lips turn blue. She remembered how cold that last kiss had been, and how harsh her voice when she had pronounced those dying words, "Be kind to thy father, and bear with him for my sake."

"*Bear with him!*" How often she had wondered

what those words could mean, till one day her trouble came. Then she learnt why her mother had died, although the doctors had discovered no disease.

Presently her recollection took a brighter form. She recalled that night which had marked an epoch in her little life, when her father had taken her to the Pergola to hear the great prima donna sing. For two nights afterwards she had not slept; for two days afterwards she had wandered about in a kind of waking dream. She had been absorbed by one desire; she would become a singer. Till then, she had sung only for her own pleasure, as a bird sings, or to amuse the contadini. Now she studied her own voice, and when she sung to others, she watched their faces to find out what pleased them most. There was one air in the opera she had heard to which they were never tired of listening. As for herself, she had fallen in love with it outright, and sang it the last thing at night before she went to bed, and in the morning as soon as she awoke.

It was her only lover. Engrossed as she was with her thoughts of art, she did not experience that vacuum of heart, that need of loving which most women feel. She was happy when she was alone

with her reveries and with her voice; if ever she was sad, it was because she saw the days pass, and her goal of glory as distant as ever from her reach.

She knew that the next day would decide her fate. She was about to make her début. So when the cold forced her to creep back to bed, although her thoughts were sobered down, they were still too anxious to let her sleep. She lay there, and suffered a fever of suspense; all burning with hope, all chilled with distrust, by turns.

As soon as it was light, she set to work with her household duties, and at the same time exercised her voice. At eleven o'clock she was dressed in her contadina costume, which was not very picturesque; it consisted of a cotton gown, a huge straw hat, hanging down the back, a gold pin passed through the hair behind, and a necklace of Roman pearls.

Lorenzo, the son of the *fattore*, was also going into Florence, and had offered to drive Maddalena in his *calessino;* being only capable of holding two, it was arranged that Restoni should walk on, and that they should meet at the Pappagallo, an inn much frequented by the country people when they visited the town.

A little after eleven Lorenzo assisted Maddalena into the *calessino*. This vehicle was a diminutive species of gig, with a backless seat, a floor of rope, large wheels, and extremely light. It was drawn by a pony from the Maremma, which could trot a mile in three minutes, and which was decorated with a plume on its head, foxes' tails hanging down its cheeks, brass harness, reins of light red worsted cord, an ornament rising from the middle of its back, like the prow of an ancient Roman trireme, and of course a fine set of jingling bells.

The *calessino* rattled rapidly down the hill, working its way in and out of the wine carts and vegetable barrows, in a most eccentric manner, for in Tuscany no kind of road law appears to be known. Maddalena replied to her companion's observations courteously, but with such brevity that he judged it best to remain silent, and contented himself with looking at her from the corners of his eyes. On arriving at the Pappagallo, they found Restoni waiting for them. They thanked Lorenzo for his kindness, and walked quickly to the Via Larga, No. 93.

The Marchese kept them waiting half an hour, by which time Maddalena had recovered from the stupe-

faction into which, like her father, she had been plunged by the splendour of the young nobleman's saloon.

With one glance Lorini seized all the points of Maddalena's appearance. Rather sallow, but so much the better, good stage complexion; tall and commanding, can play *Lucrezia*, a very good point that; *prime donne* are so small now-a-days. Manners graceful, eyes large and bright, expression *sympatica*. So far, very good.

He bowed to her politely, made her sit down. talked to her about things in general, and so discovered that she spoke pure Tuscan, neither aspirating her *c*'s nor inverting her *l*'s and *r*'s. Said a few words to her in French; she replied grammatically, but with a marked Italian accent. She summoned up courage to address him in English, to which he could only reply with a compliment in Italian. Then he showed her a portfolio of engravings, and made her say which she liked best. It was Morghen's Dresden Madonna. "This girl has taste," said he to himself.

As soon as he saw that her timidity had been a little thawed, he sat down to the piano and played

the overture to "*Guglielmo Tell.*" He watched her as he played, and saw her eyes gleam and her cheeks flush more than once. Better still, thought he, she has a soul. Now let me try her voice.

"Come," said he, with a kind smile, which won her instantly to his side. "What do you sing? You know some *stornelli,* do you not? Tell me which is your favourite one, and I will play it for you."

Maddalena became a little confused. It was like ordering him to play. He asked her again to name something. "I like *Tempo Passato* very much," she said. "It is the prettiest of all," he replied. His fingers stole over the keys, and a voice from his side ascended softly in the air:—

"Speranza del mio cor, eri una volta,
Or tu sei fatto la speranza d'altrui;
Non ti ricordi più di quella volta,
Ch'eramo innamorati tutti due.
Non ti ricordi più, non ti ricordi più;
Di quei bei giorni:
Ah! tempo passato perchè non ritorni?

"Ti ho scritto molte volte inutilmente,
Ma sempre invano aspetto la risposta;
Dimmi purchè ti sono indifferente,

Ma scrivi per pietà, cosa ti costà
Non ti ricordi più, non ti ricordi più ;
Di quei bei giorni :
Ah ! tempo passato perchè non ritorni ? ''

Lorini looked up into Maddalena's eyes; they were humid and fixed; and she was nervously wreathing together her little quivering hands.

"Signorina," he said, "it is charming; your voice has a fine *metallo,* and you sing with that sentiment, with that expression, to imitate which many of our greatest artists devote their lives. I should like to judge now of the compass of your voice. Do you know any air from an opera?"

"I have only heard one opera, sir. It was '*I Vespri Siciliani.*'"

"Excellent! Verdi's music is just suited to test the reach of a soprano. You can sing some air from it, can you not?"

"I will try to sing *Enrico, ah, parli à un Cuore,*" she said. It was the air which she loved so much.

When he played the accompaniment, it reminded her of the orchestra that night. Her brain kindled; her bosom swelled. Swept away on a torrent of

liquid sound she imagined that she was the prima donna, that she stood upon the stage. Unconsciously she assumed the attitude and wielded the gestures of the part. Then as she heard her own voice she became intoxicated—music is the wine of the soul. Singing correctly from the text till she came to the last phrase, *M'attendede il ciel mi serba fè*, she then improvised a cadenza quite different from the original, and thrice as difficult to execute. Lorini was astounded; the music died under his hands. Her features, inspired by art, had now become divine; and her voice brilliant, rapid, and sustained, had soared above the scope of any singer he had heard. She not only had the genius to create a cadenza, she had the power to execute it to perfection. And from once hearing an opera she had grasped (at least so he thought) the spirit of the part.

Then came the reaction, and she became suddenly pale. "*Per Bacco!*" cried Lorini, springing up and striking the table with his clenched hand, "*I can make you a great singer.*" At these words her eyes gave a startled flash, and her lips half formed to smile; but she sighed, her head sank upon her breast, and she fainted away.

"Signor Restoni," said Lorini that same day when close together, "if you will entrust your daughter's education entirely to me, I can promise you that in a short time she shall be able to go upon the stage."

"The Signor Marchese will understand that I am poor, that I have no means of——"

"There is no necessity to speak of that."

"But the Signor Marchese can make such an arrangement with myself that in case my daughter is successful, he shall receive a share of the profits during a certain period of time."

"I do not wish to make any such arrangements, I assure you."

"The Signor Marchese desires other terms?" asked Restoni, with an askant look from his green eyes.

"Not at all," replied Lorini, with a slight frown. "I have long wished to have the honour of bringing a great singer before the world, and I am always willing to pay for my penchants. If any trifling assistance which I may render your daughter should cause you discomfort, pray consider it as a loan which you can repay at your convenience. But nothing more than that, if you please."

Men seldom believe in the existence of those

virtues which they do not themselves possess. Jacopo Restoni was incapable of performing a generous action, or of giving any one else the credit of performing one. With habitual duplicity he made a long speech of gratitude, and with stupid cunning made up his mind that the Marchese had either taken a fancy to his daughter for herself, or that he saw a way of turning her talents to his own advantage.

Maddalena, on the other hand, considered it all pure chivalry. Both were wrong.

This adoption of a voice (which is common enough in Italy) resulted from mixed motives—like most other human actions. Lorini loved music, and he liked salon celebrity. It would give him pleasure as an artist if he could rear a great singer; it would give him prestige if he brought one out upon the stage.

CHAPTER III.

EUGENIO had lodgings taken for them in the Borgo ogni Santi. Every morning they came to his chambers, and he made Maddalena practise scales and solfeggi for two hours before he breakfasted. In the afternoon she received lessons from different masters in reading music, in playing the pianoforte, and in declamation. In the evening her father had instructions to take her to the Pergola, which was the best lesson that she could possibly receive. She made rapid progress in the rudiments of music; her mind had been disciplined in its childhood, and she readily harnessed it again. Besides she threw her whole heart into her work. Her masters were delighted; they declared that she united the talent of an Italian with the industry of an Inglese. Under the skilful tuition of Lorini her voice became more flexible—more fluent. He taught her how to

manage it, for at first it had been as wild and uncontrollable as an untamed bird. In a month's time she was perfect in her chromatic scales, and warbled them with a voice like a sweet-toned flute.

Lorini found her the most attentive and intelligent of pupils. Her mind echoed his, as her voice echoed his voice in the lessons which he gave her. She was docile, patient, persevering. These qualities of hers were delicate compliments to his amour propre.

He began to like her very much. He discovered that the two hours before breakfast were the most pleasant of his whole day, and sometimes endeavoured to repeat them by being present at the lessons which she received from other masters. He observed that she often glanced at him during these lessons; blushing when she was corrected, and with a smile on her lips seeking for a smile from his when she had been praised. Her masters told him that he ought to come every day, for that when he was present she surpassed herself. So he did come very often, and sometimes in the *prima sera* instead of driving to the Cascine.

This circumstance did not escape the vulture

eye of the Signora Pinsuti. Like that rapacious bird, she hovered above the battle-field of passion and intrigue, invisible herself, but scenting the smoke of the lightest skirmish from afar. She sent out her spies; Restoni himself was entrapped at a caffé; and the incidents which we have just related were placed in her possession.

In the meantime Lorini made a disagreeable discovery. Maddalena's voice was becoming weaker instead of growing stronger as it should have done. The voice is an excellent thermometer of health. He looked at her attentively; she had grown pale and thin. He became anxious, and asked her if the town air agreed with her. She declared that she had never felt herself so well. He suggested that a doctor should be called, but she opposed this almost violently. He observed that any reference to her health gave her annoyance and even pain. He resolved to speak to her father about her. He had not seen that gentleman for some time. Restoni escorted Maddalena to the Via Larga in the morning, and returned for her at the end of the two hours. Whenever Lorini had visited Maddalena at her lodgings he had been out. He had once said jest-

ingly to her that her father must be in love with some one, since he was always absent from her. He remembered now that this remark had appeared to distress her at the time. There was some mystery in all this, which he was determined to divine.

One morning her voice quite broke down in the high notes. There was a moment of uncomfortable silence. Maddalena's lips worked nervously, and she turned her eyes away. He took her hand in his. He felt how thin it was, and how the wrist-bones protruded. "*Cara mia,*" he said, gently, "I must send you down to Livorno for the sea-air. That will do you good." She shook her head, and gave a melancholy smile.

"No?" said he; "and what will then, Maddalena? Come, prescribe for yourself. Would you like to live in a villa—a prima donna in *erba* is allowed to have her caprices. What do you wish?"

"I wish for nothing, my benefactor," she replied.

"But how is it you are so thin, *Dio mio?* And then if you do not care for yourself, you must care for your voice. Something must be done," said Lorini, almost angrily.

Maddalena sighed, and looked at him with her

large and tender eyes. To change the subject, he spoke to her about the opera of the previous night; she stammered out some incoherent words. "In what part of the house were you?" he asked. "I could not see you anywhere." She became crimson, and made no reply. "Ah, you were not there, then? Why were you not? You must not neglect your lessons, you know. Then spoke of something else. But he felt that this absence of hers from the opera was connected in some way with her illness and her low spirits—though how, he could not conceive "Why did she not go?" thought he. "It could not have been of her own accord. How often I have watched her face there. Her father must have forgotten or refused to take her. Does he treat her badly? I do not like his face. What is the man doing?—he is always out."

When the lesson was over, and she had left the room, he called his servant, and said—"Antonio, run after the Restoni, and tell that man to come back here as soon as he has seen his daughter home."

"Signor, the daughter came here alone this morning."

Lorini frowned. "Where then is the father?"

"I do not know, Signor; but I can guess. He will be at the Tombola."

"What makes you suppose that he will be at the Tombola?"

"Signor, because Jacopo Restoni has a weakness for the Tombola."

"Umph!"

"Also for dominoes at the café."

"*Diavolo!*"

"He plays at *tresette* and *calabresella* like a madman."

"*Corpo di Bacco!*"

"And devotes himself to *morra* in his odd moments."

"The man is a gambler then?"

"Signor, he has been so all his life."

"What!"

"Jacopo Restoni, Signor Marchese, once kept a boarding-house here in Florence. His wife spoke French and English very well. Their house got a good name in the red book which the English take to church with them; but, ugh! what they made in the winter he lost in the summer. He gambled his wife to death, himself to beggary

and now he is gambling his daughter to starvation."

Lorini sprang to his feet in a fury.

"*Imbecille!*" he cried, "what are you saying?"

"I am saying, Signor Marchese, that when you sent me yesterday to their lodgings both of them happened to be out. I stopped to talk to the woman that keeps the house, who told me the signorina had eaten nothing that day, except a few apples, pretending that she was not hungry. But the woman was sure that Restoni had spent all the money which you had given him, except what he had put into the tickets for the lottery. He is always expecting to make a fortune, that man, and so he——"

"Run down to Doney's as fast as you can. Buy a pâté de foie gras and some meringues à la crême."

"Would it not be better to order some soup and some good meat?"

"Yes; what you like—what you like. Tell them to send up a breakfast for three."

Lorini took a fiacre to the Borgo ogni Santi. As he opened the door, Maddalena almost sprang into his arms.

"Ah, *scusa, signore,*" she said, recoiling gracefully. "I thought that it was my father."

He looked at her attentively. The rims of her eyes were red. She had been crying.

"I forget to tell you just now," he said, "that I intended to do myself the pleasure of breakfasting with you this morning."

"Ah!" she cried, "you know everything," and flinging herself at his feet, she implored him not to abandon them. She would make her father promise that he would not do it again. He would forgive them this time, would he not? She had been so happy till within the last few days."

He raised her up gently, and pressed her head against his breast.

"Forgive thee, my angel!" he said. "What sin hast thou committed then?"

She blushed when the tender "*tu*" issued from his lips, and looked up to his face with weeping eyes, but with a timid smile upon her lips. They sat half an hour side by side, and she confided to him all her little history. In the midst of this confession the breakfast came in. Maddalena was astounded by

the variety and number of the dishes which Antonio served.

Did she really appreciate the filet à la Flamande and the brochettes d'ortolans? I am inclined to believe that her untrained palate would almost have preferred polenta. The chef d'œuvres of painting, of music, and of the culinary art can only be enjoyed by those whose tastes have been refined by experience and study. But she pretended to be in ecstasy, chattered profusely, burst into shrieks of girlish laughter, and sang snatches of *stornelli.*

A bottle of champagne was opened with the dessert. Maddalena gave a genuine exclamation of delight when she tasted her first glass of *la veuve Clicquot.* Where is the woman who does not love champagne? Bacchus must have been inspired by Venus when he brewed this wine. They clinked their glasses, and drank together, singing a duet. But when their merriment was at its height there came a humble knock at the door. Their glasses were hurriedly replaced upon the table. They sank back into their respective seats.

"*Passi,*" said Lorini, coldly.

It was not Restoni, as they had expected, but Antonio, who handed to his master a pink and perfumed note. It had been brought from the Via Larga by one of the other servants.

"I fear that I must leave you, signorina," he said, as he ran his eye over it, and crumpled it up in his hand.

When he had left the room, after bidding her a kind *à rivederla*, Maddalena's features contracted into sadness. The transition from frantic gaiety to utter loneliness had been so quick. Besides, she knew instinctively (for she had never seen a billet-doux before) that the letter came from a woman—from a grand lady—from some one whom he was courting, or to whom, perhaps, he was betrothed. Innocent little Maddalena! She supposed that ladies and gentlemen were like contadini; that they were never intimate, except when they intended to be married to each other.

"And yet," thought she, "he crumpled it up in his hand." Could he love her if he did that? If she had received a letter from *him*, she would not have used it so. No; she would have kissed it a great many times, and she would have treasured it up, and

read it over often and often to herself. She was certain that he did not love this woman. Then she found that this thought was giving her pleasure, and reproached herself severely for her folly. Why should she be pleased, unless, indeed, this lady were unworthy of him? And she had no right to imagine that. Why was she pleased? She asked herself this as women often ask questions, without wishing to have an answer. It is not at seventeen that one cares to analyse one's own heart.

How delightful it is to give one's self up to a flood of tumultuous delicious thoughts, especially when one has struggled against them for a little while! Maddalena laid aside that mental mendacity with which women can sometimes even deceive themselves. "Eugenio," she said, aloud, "*I love thee!*" Then she blushed; her own voice had frightened her; she glanced nervously into the corners of the room, as if fearing that he would have come back without her having seen him. And then she said again, in a lower and a sadder voice, "Yes, but I must hide it from thee. Nobody shall ever know it but myself. I will love thee and worship thee at a distance, for thou art as high above me as the stars."

She buried her face in her hands, and cried a little. Then she raised her head. "Com' è gentile," she whispered. "What a beautiful face he has—what sweet perfumes float round him—when he speaks, his voice is like a song."

She went to the door and listened. Nobody was coming. She gave a little smile to herself, and running to the sofa where he had been sitting, she sat where he had sat, and kissed the place where he had leant his head.

The Baroness Sackowsky was seated before a fire of blazing wood, a scaldino filled with refined charcoal in her hands, and her little feet imbedded in slippers of precious fur. When the door was opened, and the Marchese dei Lorini was announced, she rose, bowed, and gestured to the servant to give her visitor a hand-warmer. But as soon as the door was closed, she gave a delicious smile, and pointed to a foot-stool. He obeyed the invitation; and she, taking his hands between hers, performed the office of the scaldino.

"Is it not wretched in these huge houses?" she said; "it is impossible ever to be warm."

"I should like to be at this moment in the Arctic regions," said Lorini; "to be perishing with cold; and——"

"You think that I would take a great deal of trouble with you, do you not?" she said, tossing away his hands. "How vain men are!"

"What man in my place would not be vain?"

"Always the same," she said, pouting her lips.

Lorini looked at her in the eyes, and inserted his hands in hers. The Baroness was a woman of thirty years of age. Her face was small and oval, with a sensual under lip, eyebrows pencilled, the lashes yellow, eyes of an indefinite colour—neither hazel nor grey. Her hair was golden, glossy, and abundant. It was her chief beauty. When she was alone with women they often made her take it down. Her arms and shoulders were superb. On this occasion she was dressed in a Circassian jacket embroidered with gold, leaving bare her small but rounded wrist, and fitting tightly to her figure, which was a masterpiece of Nature, embellished by Art. This woman was certainly beautiful; she was witty and accomplished—a perfect linguist, like most Russians; and played admirably upon the harp—an

instrument which she had chosen on account of the whiteness of her arms; and had a fine contralto voice. Yet there were many men who admired her coldly; others whom she inspired with an invincible repugnance. There was something cold in her voice and in her eyes which repelled those who have intuitions.

Lorini looked at her for some time, as if she had been a beautiful picture. He had never seen her dressed with such elegance and taste.

"Baroness," said he, "you are charming today."

"You mention the fact as if it were exceptional."

"No, I speak a truism."

"Therefore a platitude."

"Ah, love kills wit, you know."

"Then you have never loved me."

"I am defeated. I lay down my arms."

"And what am I to do with mine?"

Eugenio's lips had opened to make a request, when she sprang up and said—

"Oh, by-the-by, Eugenio, I forgot that I had intended not to speak to you again."

"*Nous y voila,*" muttered he.

She opened an ebony casket, and produced a letter in a feminine handwriting.

"Jesting apart, I am not of a credulous temperament. I rely as much upon your tact and good taste as I do upon my own. So I have merely kept this letter that we might laugh over it together."

As he read it, her eyes, fixed keenly upon him, resembled those of the Scandinavian lynx.

"Well?" she said.

"Well," he said; "as is usual in these cases, there is a great deal of falsehood built upon a very little truth."

"Then it is not entirely false?"

"Not entirely."

"Have you adopted a singer?"

"Yes. I have at length found what I have been looking for so long—a fine voice, supported by native talent. I have planted the girl in Florence (with her father), and I mean to cultivate her into a prima donna."

"And all this about her spending two hours with you every morning alone is utterly false, is it not?"

"No, I cannot say that it is utterly false. The girl does spend two hours with me every morning,

and we are perfectly alone. I give her a singing lesson then."

"*Il Signor Marchese dei Lorini, maestro di musica,*" said the Baroness, with a scornful laugh.

"We all have our foibles," he replied, calmly; "and this is mine."

"Indulge it by all means, but in a respectable manner. Give up your soprano, and adopt a tenore or a basso profundo."

"Find me a Rubini or a Lablache, and I will give up my Giulia Grisi."

"You prefer, then, a musical experiment to me," she exclaimed.

"I hope that you will have the kindness to let me retain both."

She began to grow anxious. Lorini was cold and polished as steel, and apparently much less flexible.

"Come, Eugenio," she said, laying her hand upon his shoulder, "let us be serious. This letter must have come from the Pinsuti. That horrid woman knows everything, and what she knows, all Florence knows as well. It is clear that our names and reputations are linked together. Then let us be all the more careful of them. If one commits an indiscre-

tion, it is the other who will suffer most. So, for my sake, give up this girl. You know, my dear, that in our world facts are trifles, but appearances grave things. Your motives, I can believe, are purely artistic; but who else will give you credit for it? You must know, that if you continue this affair—which, morally, may be sublime, but which, socially speaking, is outrageous—you will be accused of vulgar tastes, and I shall become the laughing-stock of Florence."

Lorini remained silent and perplexed. For the first time in his life, something akin to ambition (and perhaps, though he knew it not, to another feeling) struggled with his ordinary habits and tastes. He could not gainsay what the Baroness had said; he was painfully aware that every word which she had spoken was true, and, as moralists have observed, there is something sacred in truth—something in its pure integrity which awes down denial, and commands assent.

"But," he stammered out, at length, "I am only doing as others have done before me. What is more common than for noblemen to adopt soprani?"

"But not to become their music-masters. Adopt

her, if you please; but send her to Milan, and place her under the best masters. Will you promise me to do that?"

Lorini did not speak. A variety of expressions undulated across his face, and he ended by shaking his head, as if in answer to his own thoughts.

"Oh, sir," she said, "it is then as I had suspected at first. I did you too much honour in putting that thought aside. This story of her voice has been fabricated as the veil of a vulgar and debased intrigue."

The door opened, and her little daughter bounded into the room, a huge pile of flaxen hair floating round her neck.

"Ah, Eugenio, Eugenio," she cried, "have you any bon-bons for me?"

The Baroness assumed a *pose* which would have done credit to Sempronia, mother of the Gracchi.

"Go, my child," she said, "this is no place for thee."

Sashinka retired crestfallen from the room, and Lorini attempted to expostulate. The Baroness rang the bell, made a profound curtsey, and retired from the room,

Lorini tore his gloves as he put them on, going down the stairs. When a man is in an ill-temper he is apt to suppose that every one wishes to insult him. Inanimate objects, even, have the power of provoking him. As he passed the tall Russian valet, who stood like a cloth statue by the door, Lorini fancied that he detected a jeering smile upon his lips. He sprang into the fiacre, which he had kept at the door, ordered the cocchiere to drive home. In ten minutes the cab stopped, and Lorini found that he was not in the Via Larga, but in the Piazza dell' Indipendenza, which was filled with a dense crowd.

"What do you mean by bringing me here, canaglia? Is this the Via Larga?"

"Scusa," said the man, taking off his hat; "but Vossignoria is probably not aware that it is the day of the Tombola. I thought that it would please Vossignoria to witness it."

Lorini understood well enough that the man had brought him there to gratify his own curiosity. He shrugged his shoulders, and told him he might drive round. The cocchiere, as delighted as a child who had been given a toy to play with, went off cracking

his whip, and shouting to the people to let him pass.

The Piazza presented a curious scene. At one end was a stand, covered by an awning, and hung with crimson draperies. In front, fastened to the balustrade, was a glass barrel, which was being turned by a handle, and within which folded slips of papers danced up and down. A boy, blind-folded, and dressed in white—emblematical of fair play—plunged his hand in from time to time, and drew out one of the slips of paper. A horn was then blown, and the number posted on a large board. Almost every person in the crowd had a blue ticket, covered with numbers, which he pricked off as they were posted. This was Tombola, the species of lottery which is patronised by the Tuscans, and the rules of which it would be tedious to describe.

The lottery was invented in Italy, towards the end of the fourteenth century. It was principally practised by the Venetians. They named it *Borsa di Ventura*, and the prizes consisted, not of money, but of merchandise. State lotteries were next introduced, and became the fashion over Europe. But their evil results were soon recognised. In England and in

France they were abolished. In Italy they were proscribed by Innocent XII., Benedict XIII., and Clement XII.; but were afterwards revived. The lottery is still in Italy a branch of the department of finance. With one hand it puts golden eggs into the exchequer of the state, and with the other strangles the goose which lays them. It discourages labour, the real capital of a country. "Why should I work," says the Tuscan peasant, "when to-morrow the Tombola may make me a rich man for life." So he lies on his back, and waits patiently till fortune shall descend upon him.

As he drove round, Lorini caught sight of a man walking away from the crowd with his head bowed upon his breast.

"He has lost. So much the better," thought he; and he stopped the cab, beckoned Restoni in, and did not break silence till they were both together in the chambers of the Via Larga.

Even there the Marchese did not speak for some time. He walked backwards and forwards with an angry gait, sometimes flinging a furious look upon the man who stood before him, trembling, but not

abashed. Then, turning abrubtly to him, he said, "What made you go to the Tombola?".

"I see," replied Restoni, "that I cannot deceive the Signor Marchese. I will tell him the whole truth. He knows that once I was an independent man; that it is but lately misfortune has reduced me to what I am. When I received from the Signor Marchese that assistance which he so generously bestowed upon me, I experienced a new sensation. I was receiving alms. While burning with gratitude towards my patron, I was also devoured by shame that I should have sunk so low. The Signor Marchese had refused to participate in any profits which his kindness might obtain for us, and mere repayment of his money at a future time would be no repayment at all. Each time this thought passed through my brain, it was a knife which pierced my heart. I writhed beneath this agony, which the Signor Marchese will never experience, and which one must experience to understand. Then I saw the Tombola placarded upon the wall. In the night a fiery number danced before me. I rushed to the office. I said to myself, "I will no longer be a burden to my noble benefactor. But, *ohimè*,

I had been mistaken! It was not 374; it was 473."

"Thou art a liar!"

Restoni hung his head.

"I know all thy history. Thou art a confirmed gambler."

"It is true," replied Restoni, "that I am what is called a gambler. But while others gamble for mere money, or for excitement's sake, I have ever played with a noble object in view."

Lorini made an impatient gesture.

"Pray listen to me, signore. My wife was delicate in health. She could ill bear the labours of her calling. She wished for an independence. I sought it, and I lost. Already have I explained to you what led me to the Tombola to-day."

"Explain to me why your daughter did not dine yesterday."

Restoni, for the first and last time in his life, became confused.

"Signor, she dined excellently—at least—did she tell you so, then?" stammered he.

"No;" cried Lorini, "she would have let you

starve her to death, as you would have done, before she said a word."

"Starve her to death!" exclaimed Restoni, clasping his hands. "I, who would——"

"Answer me," cried Lorini, now livid with rage. "I trusted thee with money for thy daughter—dost thou hear? for thy daughter—not for thee. Thou art nothing. Thou hast spent that money on thyself—no matter on what—thou hast spent it on thyself. Thou art a thief."

None are so indignant as persons of bad character, when they happen to be unjustly accused. It is at once a calumny and a just reproach.

Restoni did not answer a word. He bowed his head low, as if to let the storm of words (which did not end there) pass over without blasting him upon the spot. One tear, secreted by his angry grief, rolled slowly down his cheek. He stood still for several minutes, his lips working nervously together.

When Lorini found that he was not answered, when he saw the tear, he felt as little ashamed. It is an awkward thing that, seeing a man cry. It is like hearing a horse scream. He began to think that he had been too harsh, and he was forced to

own to himself that his interview with the Baroness had contributed much to his severity.

"Signore," said the man in a subdued and quivering voice, "you have been hard upon me, but perhaps I have deserved it. I have proved myself unworthy of your confidence. Yet I trust that you will not punish the daughter for the father's fault. If you wish to separate me from her, I will go. Her career shall not be ruined by my selfish love. But I hope that you will not punish me so cruelly, and that you will devise some means by which we may be maintained without more money being placed within my hands."

"I have already thought of one," said Lorini, resuming the lofty and polished manner which was habitual to him. "I have a suite of rooms here on the second floor, which I do not occupy. They shall be prepared for the reception of your daughter and yourself; my servants shall attend to all your wants. Will this arrangement be convenient to you?"

Restoni bowed humbly and retired from the room. When once outside the door, he gave a gasp, and let loose his face. Muttering imprecations between his teeth, he dashed out of the city, and buried himself

among the dark groves of the Cascine. When he returned, it was midnight; he was covered with dirt, and almost speechless from fatigue. Maddalena gave him some wine and put him to bed, where he remained two days.

These fiery ebullitions can only be studied in the south of Europe. Sometimes they merely flash and disappear; sometimes they concentrate into resolves, and smoulder—*chi sa?*—a life-time it may be.

CHAPTER IV.

In offering the Restoni a home beneath his roof, Lorini had obeyed an impulse which it would be difficult to define. It was a river which had several sources. He had been piqued by the Baroness, and cared little at the moment what he said or did. Perhaps Maddalena herself, not only as an artist but as a woman, might have influenced this decision. She loved him; and love, they say, is a contagious disease. As the observant physician detects symptoms of fever in the bright eyes and rapid utterance of one who is boasting of his buoyant health, so might the Baroness have had reason for suspecting that the contadina was her rival.

The next morning, however, Lorini repented of the promise which he had made. He saw that if he kept it, he would have to exile himself from society. No, he could not do that. He would send Madda-

lena to Milan, and revenge himself upon the Baroness by paying court to the Princess Pallidenese, her chief rival. But when his pupil did not come as usual on account of her father's illness, he found that the forenoon hung heavily upon his hands. He went down to Doney's and the Club. The young men disgusted him with their vapid conversation. He paid a round of visits, but the furtive looks, the tiny tittle-tattle, the double-entendres, the censorious gossip of the salon, had lost their charms for him. Instead of driving to the Cascine, he went to visit Maddalena. She had written to tell him of her father's illness, but was evidently ignorant of its cause. He found her rather cold and constrained: there was something affected in her manner: he had little idea from what it came. But she could not hide her delight when he told her that he thought of taking them to live with him. He only thought of it, he said, he was not quite sure; and gave the orders to the upholsterers as soon as he left the house. He countermanded it on the morrow, repeated it the next day, and so passed a week in a state of SEE-SAW, now inclining to the Baroness and Society, now to Art and Maddalena. He received several

tender letters from the Baroness; but one look which escaped from the eyes of Maddalena had quite as much effect upon him. In fact, his mind just then was pretty equally balanced. Had he been compelled to adopt either one plan or the other, he would have been perfectly contented in three days' time. But perfect liberty is sometimes inconvenient. It compels one to select, and the necessity of choice can disturb the mind more than the necessity of resignation.

It all ended with the Restoni being established in the Via Larga secondo piano, No. 93. The esclandre was immense. To those who have lived only in Paris or in London this must be explained. Society in Florence resembles a domestic circle. Indeed till within the last few years the Florentines almost always intermarried. Thus forming one great family, though divided by political dissensions, they spy one another's actions with all the watchfulness, and comment upon them with all the ill-nature of relations. It had been generally known that Lorini was intimate with Maddalena. But here, as elsewhere, Society is not too severe with its young men. The Baroness, as she had conjectured, was laughed at a

little, that was all. But when he took Maddalena into the same house, he committed an outrage: he insulted Society in public; he spat in the World's face. Only the most prompt penance could save him from a sentence of excommunication.

His nearest relatives belonged to the Codini of the *rien ne va plus* school. They bore historical names, and had been great people in the Court of the Grand Duke. Refusing to recognise the new state of things, they had withdrawn themselves into a circle of their own. Soured by defeat, and deprived of rich sinecures, they visited only at one another's houses, to lament over the fallen fortunes of the old régime, and to jeer at the vulgarity of the king's balls. With this coterie (a kind of Faubourg St. Germain, with neither its power nor its wealth) Lorini had always been a favourite. He had been accustomed to spend many of his evenings in their dull but distinguished circle; and they watched his life with interest, for he was the last of a very ancient line.

Conceive the horror of these dames and seigneurs when they heard of his infatuated act. He was besieged by letters, and replied to those which were not always moderate, with moderation and politeness.

He intended, he said, to retire from the world for a short time, to study musical composition, and prepare his protégée, the Signorina Restoni, for the stage. The presence of her father was a sufficient guarantee that the young lady and himself were wronged by their insinuations.

But, unhappily, in Florence the presence of a father guarantees nothing of the kind. Lorini was looked upon as a lost man; his relatives renounced him. Society deplored his fall in epigrams and bon-mots; there was a caricature in the *Lampione*, and the subject was soon afterwards dismissed from the salons. When the foreigners who came to Florence after the season at Rome inquired about him, they were answered with a shake of the fore-finger—that expressive gesture with which the Florentine can destroy a man's honour or a woman's reputation.

Everybody had been very much astonished when they heard of it; Lorini had always been regarded as a talented man of society and nothing more. But he was now putting into action what he had dreamt of more than once. He was at heart an artist. Cursed with wealth, good looks, and social accomplishments, his nobler instincts had been frosted over by the

iced sugar of the world. But they had sometimes awoke and sung within him. Often he had hankered after solitude. Often he had dreamt of retreating to some charming and secluded spot, and of devoting himself to music, mingled perhaps with love. Now the die was cast; he was at sea with Maddalena; land was out of sight; and they were sailing with a fair wind towards unknown shores.

It was natural that, embarked in a new life, he should have his moments of discontent. We are the creatures of habit, and prone to regret the past. He often felt restless at those hours when he had been accustomed to go out into the world. He would sigh for those long and lazy afternoons which he had spent among women like a sultan in his seraglio; caressed by their voices and their eyes, imbibing their pretty tattle, and persuading each that he loved her the best of all. Or for those brilliant nights when the chosen crowded round the piano to listen to airs which he had composed for them, and which none but they might hear. Or for the hours which he had passed with Olga Sackowsky, the most splendid and voluptuous woman he had ever known. But such feelings grew fainter and fainter every day, and

had apparently expired, when May, the month of the *villeggiatura,* arrived. The *villeggiatura* has existed since times immemorial. There is quite a city of villas in the campagna of Florence, and none of them are modern buildings. The Villa Lorini was charming. Its snow-white sides were relieved with green doors and *persiane;* a cypress avenue led up to it; Fiesole hung over it; it was half-covered by flowers, and embowered amongst trees. From its terrace there was a splendid view of the valley of the Arno, and of the blue city reposing by the silver stream.

Lorini admitted no one to his villa. He dismissed Maddalena's masters, and charged himself with her education. That is to say, he taught her the piano and the poets, and filled her mind with general information. Her vocal progress was surprising. She could run the chromatic scales up and down, and execute the most difficult solfeggi with the ease of an experienced artist. Her voice was a marvellous instrument, which increased every day in compass and power, and on which she had now learnt to play with skill. She had certain faults of style; for instance, a trembling of the under-lip when she sang.

Lorini corrected her of this by making her hold a looking-glass before her face. Then her middle notes were obscure and veiled; there were harsh tones in her lower notes, which descended into the register of the contralto; and her high notes were so shrill that they sometimes resembled shrieks. But this very shrillness was a sign of strength, as exaggeration in a young writer is often a sign of power. Time and patience could remedy most of these defects; as for the others, no voice can be quite perfect, and Maddalena gave hopes of some day possessing that talent with which Malibran could make a beauty of a blemish.

She had been very industrious in the winter, and was already more accomplished than most Florentine girls—who remain as yet unscathed by the high-pressure system of modern education. But she had also acquired the air and breeding of a lady. Insensibly she had absorbed from Lorini the nobility of his manners, the fluency of his utterance, the subdued tone of his voice, the grace of his gestures, the delicacy of his tastes, and had reproduced them in herself disguised in female garb. What are women, after all, but tinted reflections of men? Except their hearts. Maddalena's heart, her warm, tender little

heart, was all her own. She loved and she revered Lorini; she prostrated herself heart and mind before this idol of her soul; she no longer prayed to the Virgin as she had been wont to do. She went to mass and to vespers, but these were mere visits of ceremony to a holy place. Eugenio was her god.

She worshipped him as saints adore the Almighty, without limit, and without hope; as One whom in this life they can never approach, and Who can never descend to them. And with the sublime hypocrisy of her sex she carefully concealed this love. She was always gay and sprightly with him; sometimes she made herself almost flippant, till he thought her a coquette; if he spoke to her of love she would give a little laugh, and say that she did not believe in passion of a serious kind; when sometimes he playfully took her hand in his, she would yield it to him without trembling; when he looked deep into her eyes she would fill them with a saucy light; when he put his arm round her to waltz with her, for it was thus he taught her dancing, she would sing the measure with a firm voice. Sometimes only she felt that her lips twitched a little at such moments, but he did not observe it—he had

not learnt that a woman's mouth is the least fortified feature of her face.

Concealment is the first law of woman's nature. In pursuing these tactics of the heart, Maddalena had but obeyed an instinct. Had she consulted her reason, and devised some elaborate scheme for the storming of Lorini's heart, she would not have succeeded as she eventually did. Women are most dangerous when they oppose us with their intuitions. Their schemes are silly. The woman who reflects is lost. Maddalena, retreating under arms, roused Lorini to rush upon his own destruction.

At first he had taken it for granted that she would fall in love with him, had thought gravely over it, and had concluded that, as a man of honour, he ought to give this passion no encouragement. He had even laid down with precision the line of conduct which he intended to pursue. He had framed a pretty speech which was to respond to her first declaration, and which, without wounding her feelings, would point out to her the social gulf which lay between them. He would be to her not only as a patron, but as a brother, as a friend; he would watch over her interests through life; he would

counsel her in perplexity, and console her in distress; he would give her everything in fact but love.

He was a little disappointed when he found that this dénoûment was being very long delayed. Then he was piqued by her apparent coldness and coquetry; he began to desire for that which he supposed that he had dreaded; he began to make love to her at first carelessly, then earnestly, and always without success. Finally, he found himself so ardently wishing that she would love him, that he began to suspect he loved her himself.

"*Do I love her?*" is a question which often perplexes the heart. Love, it is true, sometimes, is like an electric shock. A single glance, the peculiar modulation of a word, the pressure of a hand, the mere contact of a dress, will cause this unknown principle to pass from soul to soul. But more frequently sympathy slowly leads to friendship, which is the border-land of love. And how difficult it is to draw the boundary line between the two. They melt imperceptibly into one another like sea and sky when the horizon is unclouded and the sea is calm.

But when love is stirred by passionate winds it foams forth in its own form; and then you discover

that the sea and sky apparently so near are millions of miles apart.

One evening in May they were walking in the garden together; the soft air of spring caressed their foreheads and their cheeks; the cypresses became dusky as the sun sank low; a night-hawk wheeled among them chasing moths; sometimes a fire-fly sparkled by.

On such a night as this the head dreams and the heart yearns for love. They were silent, but each was filled with the same thought. A word was wanting, that was all. They sat down on a marble bench. As Maddalena arranged her dress, her hand touched his. He clasped it, and pressed it tenderly.

"Art thou happy in thy new life, Maddalena?" he said. There was a new tone in his voice. She felt that she was loved. The tears rushed to her eyes, and, without speaking, she raised his hand to her lips.

Again they were silent, till the full moon arose, and bathed them in its light. They could see each other's faces now. "Maddalena," he whispered, "wilt thou sing?"

She sang that divine air from *Torquato Tasso.*

"*Io l'udia ne' suoi bei carmi.*" Her voice trembled more than once, and when she came to the phrase, "*Ah l'amor che sembra un gioco poi divien necessita,*" she raised her eyes to his with a timid yearning look. His heart gave a violent throb. He loved. He turned away his face for a moment, then flung his arms around her neck.

They sat together for two hours, and conversed. No matter what they said. The dialogue of lovers is a beautiful melody, set to commonplace words. The tune is untranslatable. The dull words only can be written upon paper.

They had quite played out their little comedy of mock indifference, with its cold words and its furtive glances, its feigned smiles and its secret tears. They now looked into each other's eyes with open, honest, confiding love. That look was a pledge for the future, and a confession of the past.

That was a happy summer for Maddalena. Love and Art, instead of tearing her in two, as frequently happens, were entwined in her, and gave each other mutual support. The imitative arts do not require that solitude which is indispensable for the creative. She ascended the hill of knowledge, leaning on his

shoulder. No wonder, then, that she loved to walk far and long. She found flowers on both sides of the road, and when they came to rough places, he carried her over in his arms. In art, then, she was advancing. She felt that she must succeed.

And in love what more could she desire? She was always with him. Their lives were welded into one. She called him Eugenio now. She caressed him, and teased him, and *tutoyéd* him. She had passed from the *ella* to the *voi*, and from the *voi* to the *tu*. Yes, she dared to *tutoyer* this noble being, to whom she had once looked up as one who might be worshipped, but not approached. She had discovered that he was a man, after all. He had descended from his pedestal. Her awe had turned into tenderness. He was hers now, and she loved him all the more because she revered him less. No one could have been more happy. She had no cause for jealousy, and she was too young to feel vague distrust. It is only when we grow older that we are sad in the midst of happiness, because experience has taught us that it is not in happiness to last. Maddalena resembled a traveller, who, transported from sombre Europe to some tropical land, sees day

after day pass over him without a cloud. At first astonished, he afterwards becomes habituated to this constant brightness, revels ignorantly in the sunshine, and forgets that Nature can nowhere do her work without a rainy season.

Maddalena was not only an artist and a lover; she was a girl. Neither brain nor heart can be always on the stretch, and she had her girlish pleasures, which filled up the interstices of a life composed of two great passions. Amongst these were their rides and drives in the charming environs of Florence; their dinners at Doney's; the *spume*, and other elaborate ices, which they sipped at Castelmau's; their moonlight suppers in the Cascine; the opera buffa at the Pagliano; and the circus at the Politteamo, a vast amphitheatre in the open air, after the antique; their visits to the galleries, the churches, and the modern studios, with Eugenio as her guidebook; and a week's sea-bathing at Leghorn.

Lorini engaged a French maid to teach her the art of dress, for which all women are born with a natural gift, as they are for dancing; but which requires cultivation. He was not one of those who affect to disdain women for taking pains with their

dress. He declared that every woman who dressed herself well was an artist; and that she who created a new effect deserved to be called a genius. "If millinery is women's literature," he would say, "it is because you men pay more attention to their exteriors than to their minds. They appeal to your hearts through your eyes, like the priests who cover the Madonna with jewels to rouse the religious feelings of the peasants. When you are less savage the women will decorate their intellects as tastefully as they now dress their persons."

So important councils were held, and despatches sent off to the fashionable French shops, where silks and velvets from Lyons are supplied to the descendants of those manufacturers whose looms supplied all Europe. I might describe many pretty scenes which then occurred. Imagine a young girl seeing herself in a cheval mirror, dressed as a lady for the first time. But I shall content myself with one scene, and that by no means novel; in fact, it was an adaptation.

Maddalena was now sufficiently advanced to learn the soprano parts from operas. She had just finished that of Margherita in Guonod's *Faust*. Eugenio,

who had not yet given her any jewellery, made an excuse for leaving her one evening, and placed on the marble bench a casket of jewels which he had purchased that day on the Ponte Vecchio. He then hid himself among the cypresses. Maddalena waited for him half an hour, ran out to look for him, found the casket, opened it, and guessing what Eugenio wished, assumed the part of Margherita, commenced at "*che veggo la?*" and sang through the scene. Eugenio joined her, and they ended the first act.

Then there was a moment of silence. Eugenio was reflecting on the part which he had just played. No such thought troubled Maddalena. The innocent child scarcely understood what it was that she had sung. She gave a little laugh.

"I had to sing my part without a mirror, benevolent Signor."

"And I mine without a Mephistopheles. Thank God," he murmured, "I have not one even in my heart."

At that moment he saw a dark form creep by. It was Restoni, who, ignorant of their presence, was prowling in the garden, as he often did at night. He passed close to them. A ghastly moon-ray fell upon

his face. He was thinking, and there are faces which are hideous in thought.

"Father!" cried Maddalena.

When he saw Lorini he gave an obsequious smile, and addressed to him some banal compliment. Lorini answered haughtily. Maddalena sighed. This was her one trouble. Eugenio did not conceal his contempt for her father. It was a want of delicacy which is rare in an Italian; but he was at that age when one is too proud to dissemble to spare other people's feelings.

This incident, trifling as it was, gave a peculiar turn to his thoughts that night.

Of late Eugenio had become a different man. His heart, grown grey before its time, and sadly battered by a thousand and one intrigues, had been revived by the pure emanations of Maddalena's love, and had entered on a period of second youth. But there were moments when the ironical laughter of experience awoke him from his dream, when his mind re-asserted its power and forced him to reflect. He would deride himself as an infatuated fool. "This love of mine is but a caprice," he would say to himself. "This *villeggiatura* will be a romantic episode

in my life; and yet I can persuade this girl, and sometimes persuade myself, that I shall be true to her for ever. How often I have thought so, and how one by one my illusions have been destroyed. And now, having served an apprenticeship of folly, and having begun to understand what women are, I fall back into the slough, and sink deeper than I ever was before. This life must soon end. She will make her début and her reputation, take engagements abroad, travel over Europe, win a fortune and a husband; while I, having made a habit of her, shall be left unfit for anything else. Or perhaps she will refuse to leave me, and be wretched if I leave her. I must put an end to this at once." Thus Lorini had often argued with himself, and often at the very moment when he held her in his arms, when he tasted an emotion, when he felt the delicious spasms of mental love, he would analyse them coldly, in spite of himself. It is a sad faculty this. Its tyranny is not to be shaken off. Eugenio longed for the folly and blindness of the lover, as other men long for the wisdom of the world. "I do not really love her," he would say to himself, "since I can thus dissect myself, thus coldly calculate the future, and

thus sneer at an influence which I am unable to resist."

Maddalena was ignorant of all this, though there was something in him which she could not understand. Sometimes in the climax of their transports, she had seen a cold smile cross his lips; sometimes he would leave her abruptly; sometimes he would be sullen, and scarcely speak. If she asked him afterwards what this meant, he would laughingly deny it, or else give her a kiss, and say that he had his odd moments, and that she must not mind them. So she used to watch these clouds, but never spoke of them again.

More than once he had entered her presence with the resolution of proving to her the folly of their liaison, but his courage had always failed him; and he had seldom been long in her company before his virtuous intentions had melted away. But on this night he took a solemn vow. He would give up Maddalena. He would unrip this intimacy seam by seam: it would cost them some pain at first, but it would be better for them both in the end. On returning to Florence in September, he would place her in apartments of her own. After her *debut* he

would leave her to form her own society from the hundreds who would strive to know her. Having thus furnished her with distractions, he would little by little alienate himself from her. Nothing could be more simple than such a line of conduct: and he believed that he would be able to pursue it. But it is not so easy a thing, the infanticide of a first-born love, as he discovered the next day.

It had been arranged that they should visit Vallambrosa. They started early in the morning, in the mail phaeton, Maddalena sitting by Eugenio's side, Restoni with Antonio behind. It was a delicious drive. The air was fresh, but not cold. The sky was of a pale blue, with one patch of dark cloud hovering like folds of smoke upon the brink of the horizon. They passed through the grey-green olive groves which encircle Florence, and came to the vineyards, among which oxen were at plough, their white sides mottled by the shadows from the trees.

Crowning the summits of the neighbouring hills were tall, dark, graceful cypresses, presenting the appearance of gigantic garden shrubs. Presently the mountains came in view, veiled by a transparent mist.

The sun rose, and poured over them its golden light: the sky became of a deeper blue; thrushes burst out in song among the trees, and larks above them in the air.

The stone-walls by the road-side gave place to hedges of a delightful green, mingled prettily with the white flowers of the sweet-briar, and clusters of coral coloured berries. In two hours they arrived at Pelago, an old-fashioned little village, with a rude pebbled pavement, quaint smoke-blackened chimneys, here and there a sun-dial on a house-front, or a fragment of antique wall crumbling under ivy, and a population which turned out bodily into the streets to stare at them, as they clattered by.

They breakfasted in primitive fashion at the little inn. Then Restoni left them to make arrangements for the ride up the mountains. Maddalena crept up to Lorini, and clasped her hands round his arm.

"Art thou angry with me, Eugenio?"

"I angry with thee?"

"Yes, thou art so cold: thou dost not look at me in the eyes: just now thou saidst *voi*."

He scarcely knew what to reply, and was not

sorry that a servant came into the room just then. Directly afterwards the horses were brought round. They were small, shaggy animals, without personal beauty, but very sure upon their feet, and were accompanied by three boys who incited them onwards with frantic howls.

After an hour's ride through groves of chestnut and oak, they entered the pine forests of the Apennines. The peculiar perfume of these trees, and the sudden obscurity which they caused, had a strange effect upon Eugenio. He felt drawn towards Maddalena: he no longer avoided her wistful look: he furtively pressed her hand. Presently the road branched in two directions. Eugenio took the wrong one, and one of the boys called out, "This way, this way, *marito*." Maddalena became crimson to the eyes. "Let us rest here a little," said Eugenio, softly. They dismounted. Restoni rode on; the boys crowned themselves with leaves; and the two young lovers sat whispering together.

Continuing their journey, they came upon a fresh scene. They left behind them the silver-tipped pines, the rambling briars, and the moss-covered

ground, for an expanse of turf shadowed by broad-branching trees.

In the centre of this park was a noble convent; and adjoining it a small house, which consisted of a dining saloon and a few chambers. In this building visitors were received and permitted to enjoy the hospitality of the order for three days.

This was the sanctuary of Vallambrosa. They were received by two lay-brothers, escorted to their chambers and informed that the dinner would be immediately served. It was a maigre day, but the repast was plentiful, and delicately cooked. When it was over, Lorini expressed a wish to see the convent. He knew that women were not admitted; it was an excellent excuse to escape from Maddalena. He was shown the cell, the cloisters, and the library. Instead of going to the chapel, where Maddalena probably would be, he walked to a neighbouring hill, and sat there watching the sun-set, renewing his resolutions, and reproaching himself for his weakness in the wood. When he returned, he saw that Maddalena had been crying. His heart smote him; at the same time he felt proud of his valiant self-control. Pre-

tending that he was tired, he went to bed. The next morning Maddalena greeted him as usual. Restoni said something which offended him; he reproached him in a stern and cutting manner. When they were alone she expostulated with him; he replied with cold politeness. Then came reproaches and retorts; they had a quarrel which lasted an hour and twenty minutes by the convent clock. Now, love-quarrels are dangerous things; they have their reaction, and usually end with a kiss. What could Eugenio do after all? This girl owed everything to him, and when she asked him sadly how she had offended him, whether he was tired of her, and offered to go back to the little cottage at San Miniato, he felt ashamed of himself, and prayed her to forgive him. Eugenio was a gentleman; he felt that the contest was not equal, and yielded to her weakness—and his own.

Love should not be painted blind. Eugenio saw the danger, resolved to fly from it, and fluttered feebly down its jaws. Men, as a rule, close their ears to reason, that they may act upon an impulse. It is useless to give advice to gamblers, drunkards, and lovers; they go down to ruin, not

in ignorance, but in spite of their own common sense.

But there was one temptation, and I need scarcely say that at times it was a strong one, which he did not resist in vain. Eugenio had been dissipated, but he had never been depraved. His honour forbad him to assassinate the innocence of this pure and confiding girl. Here, too, reason and even calculation came to his aid. Intrigue was no novelty to him. He knew that it absorbs all nobler emotions, and stifles them within itself. He knew that he should lose those chaste and delicate pleasures which he now enjoyed—that little flutter of the heart when he saw her for the first time in the day—that electric thrill which he felt when he kissed her, when her hand touched his, when her voice roused him from a reverie, when he heard her dress rustle on the stairs, when he thought of her before he slept. And he knew what he should gain—some moments of rapture; and then he would lose mystery after mystery, illusion after illusion, till the last vestment of his passion would have fallen to the ground; till cold, naked, monotonous satiety would stand before him —nothing left to imagine, to hope for, to desire; his

self-respect gone; and Maddalena ruined in body and in mind. For he knew that woman, to achieve great things, must be chaste. Men can play with passion; women become its slaves.

So he exercised a self-control, of which many a moral and well-meaning young man would have been incapable. Perhaps only a man who could win a Baroness Sackowsky, could spare a child whose ignorance placed her at his mercy. The greatest conquerors are the most magnanimous.

So this sweet *villeggiatura* glided by. Our lovers existed in a dream; and such a dream which visits one but once. It passes imperceptibly, but is the landmark of a lifetime. How often toiling in the dusty road one gazes back on such memories gilding the past, and exclaims—

"Ah, tempo passato, perchè non ritorni?"

* * * * * * *

Towards the end of the summer they returned to town. It was soon rumoured that Lorini's soprano could sing up to the F in alto. Vivaldi, who had been at Civita Vecchia, visited them every day. He persuaded the Marchese to open his saloon twice

a-week to the *dilettanti di musica.* Maddalena created one of those rehearsal furores which sometimes harbinger a reputation. The news ran down to Leghorn. The manager of the opera there is also the manager of the Pergola at Florence. As soon as the season ends in one town it commences in the other. This gentleman came up by the next train to Florence, and heard Maddalena sing—*Una voce poco fa,* and *Di tanti palpiti.* At the close of the interview a scrittura was sealed and signed. Maddalena Restoni was engaged as prima donna del Teatro Pergola, Firenze. She was allowed to choose her opera, and Eugenio selected *Linda di Chamouni.*

She was already well acquainted with the music of the part; he had now to teach her how to sing it on the stage. This proved to be a very difficult task.

When she had sung to him, *Enrico, ah, parli à un cuore,* on the first day that he had seen her she had made him suppose that she had great dramatic talent. He thought that she had grasped the spirit of the part. In reality, however, she had but reproduced the prima donna whom she had seen upon the stage: she had unconsciously imitated her looks, her

gestures, and her intonation, but without really understanding a word of what she sang.

She had not seen *Linda di Chamouni* performed, and he could not make her realize her *rôle.* She sang it splendidly, but without feeling and without art. She reserved nothing: she exhausted her vocal resources in the *O luce di quest' anima* of the first act: she fired away her ammunition at the very beginning of the battle. Then she would embellish the text of the composer with original cadenze, which were generally out of place. He could not make her understand, that in a pathetic phrase simplicity was preferable to fioritura.

She might easily be taught to husband the powers of her voice; and that meretricious love of ornament, which defaced Catalani's style, might be repressed in her, for she was, at least, docile and obedient: but how supply that which was wanting? how infuse into her mind those instincts of nature which form the true main-springs of art? She regarded her voice as a machine of startling and beautiful sound; the opera as a building in which it could be heard to advantage. When Eugenio told her that she must sing to the hearts of her audience as well as to their

ears, she did not understand him. He was in despair. She would not make a fiasco; her voice would carry her through; but she would not attain that grand success on which he had set his heart.

He conversed with Vivaldi about this. The poeta replied that there was one method which might succeed, if he would choose to give it a trial. Eugenio declared that he would try anything. He hesitated, however, before he adopted the plan suggested by Vivaldi. But he consoled himself with the idea that it was all for Maddalena's good.

Linda di Chamouni is a peasant girl of Savoy. She is in love with Carlo, who is disguised as a poor painter, but who is really Viscount di Sirval. To escape from the addresses of an old roué, her parents send her to Paris (end of first act). There she is found by her lover, who gives her a home beneath his roof, and promises to marry her. But a tyrannical parent is forcing him against his will to wed a lady of rank. Linda's father enters her room to ask for alms: seeing her surrounded by splendour, he believes that she is guilty, and curses her. At the same time she hears of her lover's marriage, and goes mad. In the last act she is restored to her humble

home, and afterwards to her reason by the voice of her lover, and by an air which they had sung together in their happy days.

Now there was, as may be seen, a kind of resemblance between the earlier scenes of this opera and of our young lovers' lives. It was arranged that Eugenio should personate the Viscount di Sirval. They hoped that thus he would teach his pupil to imagine that she was Linda. The experiment succeeded, though not without cost to poor Maddalena. She became an artist at the price of a delusive hope.

The comedy thus commenced. Vivaldi sat down to the piano. Eugenio, in a picturesque dress, and beautiful as an Apollo, entered the room. He sang the *Non vederti,* &c., with such passion and feeling that the tears flowed into Maddalena's eyes; and when she sang, it was with the words of Linda, but with the heart of Maddalena. Her bosom heaved; she blushed, and her voice trembled with emotion.

"*She is alight!*" whispered Vivaldi. "I will make her blaze," cried Eugenio. And when he sang that beautiful air which pervades the opera, like the "Last Rose of Summer" in Marta, recurring again and

again, Maddalena flung herself sobbing into his arms. She believed that the *tuo sposo diverrò* was a real promise, so earnestly had he sung it—so tenderly had he gazed into her eyes. Then, breathless with joy she sang it herself, and again with him. Eugenio exchanged a look of triumph with Vivaldi, who pirouetted madly round the room. "Oh! if your voice were stronger, *caro mio*," he cried, "what a furore you two would make. But I will bring our tenor up here; she must learn to sing it like that with him." This spoilt Maddalena's dream; a cloud came over her face; and she hurried from the room.

"I don't like this, Vivaldi," said Eugenio; "it is playing with her heart. I love her dearly, but of course I could not marry her."

"*Per Bacco*, no!" said Vivaldi.

"Well, you see she thinks that ——"

"La, la, la! that will pass. But now I want to talk with you gravely. My libretto is finished. I have it here in my pocket, and will read it to you if you please."

"With great pleasure. Come into the garden, and bring that cigar-case with you."

Eugenio was delighted with the book. "It is a real poem," he said; "and must not be thrown away upon a second-rate composer. Let me have it at your own terms. The part of the heroine will suit Maddalena admirably. I will take it to Meyerbeer and make him write the opera for her."

"I am glad that you like the book, because I wrote it for you."

"For me, my friend. An opera is far beyond my strength. Since I have been living here, I have written some pretty trifles. I scribble them down on scraps of paper while Maddalena is practising; but an opera is a stupendous work."

"Lorini, you do not know your own genius. Unfold your wings, and you will be astonished at their size. Try them, and you will find them strong. Knock at the door of your own mind, and wonders shall be revealed to you. You will enter a new world, where all will appear beyond your reach till you struggle, and then you will discover that all may be obtained. Try it; it is an experiment which I myself have made."

"But, my dear, Meyerbeer would snatch at this

book, and he would certainly do it justice. Why select a neophyte to clothe your verse?"

"In the first place, because I am your friend; secondly, because I am a patriot. We three might make a glorious Trinity of art—a Mozart, a Catalani, a Metastasio. Bravi! we should make Florence once more famous."

"I will try," said Eugenio, taking the book.

"And succeed. As for our little girl here, I have no longer any fears for her. You will find that all will go on smoothly now."

He was right. Maddalena, seated at her window, was bewildered by the ideas which were seething in her brain. Her intellect had arrived at its puberty. A new faculty had been born within her. In studying an abstract science or an art, we labour in a labyrinth at first, till presently a film seems to fall from our eyes; we seize the clue, look back with wonder at our confused and tortuous foot-prints in the sand, and march onwards with prodigious strides. It is impossible in most cases to trace this transfiguration of thought to any palpable cause. It is sudden, and apparently accidental. But with Maddalena, its source lay in her sentiments. Her emotions were

the parents of her ideas; her heart had been touched, and her mind flew open.

Now, for the first time, she could put herself in Linda's place; she could idealize herself. She sang the airs again; but she sang them now as the Savoyard girl. She was intoxicated; she did not recognize herself. She exalted herself into a trance; she heard distinctly round her the clamour of the peasants, and the voices of her aged parents; she saw before her huge mountains covered with snow. At length her brain, wearied with its first efforts, poured forth no more ideas; exhausted, she flung herself upon the bed; her head felt heavy, but ere she went to sleep she thought of Eugenio, and of the promise which he had made her with his eyes, and flinging forth her arms, she clasped his image to her breast, and sang in her sweet low voice,

> "In faccia al cielo agli uomini
> Tua sposa diverrò."

She sank to sleep believing that she held Eugenio within her arms. Poor girl! she had only embraced the air.

Lorini was surprised by the progress which Maddalena made, and declared that she was perfect.

But she failed to satisfy herself. It is one thing to understand, another to express. Ideas pass to and fro in the author's brain, which evaporate when he attempts to form them into words. The painter is haunted by faces which fade from him like ghosts when he takes the pencil in his hand. And the actor may actually feel emotions which he attempts in vain to portray.

Though the opera of *Linda* is slight, its prima donna has a fine dramatic rôle. In almost every scene she depicts a grand emotion. The joys of a peaceful and trusting love; the grief of a young girl torn from her parents and her home; the indignation of a woman insulted by the offers of a roué; the struggle between modesty and passion, appealing in her weakness to her lover's generosity to preserve her chastity unstained; her father's fearful reproaches, and his malediction; her lover's betrayal of her; then insanity in almost all its varied forms—its frantic gaiety, its deep and silent sadness, its rays of memory, its snatches of old songs—and lastly, the joy, scarce less wild than madness, when she awakes and finds herself restored at once to her home, to her parents, and to her lover's heart.

There is much that is mechanical in acting as there is in all the arts; but she soon learned what is called the *business* of the stage. Lorini took her to the mad-house, that she might study faces, and to Pistoia, that she might see mountains. Then the stage rehearsals came on, and posters flaring in all the streets announced that the opera season had begun.

In Florence the *loge* at the theatre has taken the place of the *loggia* which was formerly attached to every nobleman's house. A box at the Pergola is a miniature salon, where young men are initiated into society, and young wives into intrigue; where people perform comedies and tragedies as romantic very often as those which are represented on the stage, with this difference, that in the latter case the players study to display their passions, in the former to conceal them.

The overture and the opening scenes were of course not listened to. The *crócchio ristretto* was more unrestrained than usual; it was the beginning of the season, and general curiosity prevailed. "Who is in the ——'s box?"—"Oh, I don't know; somebody they've sold it to."—"Is that the Princess Pallidenese?"—"Yes, with a bran-new complexion, for

the season."—"Is the Baroness Sackowsky here?"—"Yes, don't you see her in her old box, No. 2, grand tier? Isn't she a pretty woman? What graceful arms!"—"Who is she looking at?"—"Ah, she is *en lorgnant* Lorini, her old lover. He is the patron, &c., of the young lady who makes her *débût* to-night. She was a contadina. Lorini was driving on the Bologna road when he saw her plaiting straw by the way-side; he fell in love with her, and afterwards discovered that she had a voice. At that time he was the cavalier of the Baroness. She gave him his *congé* of course, and handed over his place to the Vicomte de Beaumont, that military-looking man, decorated, sitting behind her in the box."—"And which is Lorini?"—"First row of the stalls, third seat from the other side. Yes, very handsome for a Florentine, is he not? One would think that he was a Venetian. He was a great loss to society. But now we shall see our rival. *Ah! non so male!*"

Maddalena's appearance (she was almost beautiful on the stage), her evident timidity, and the fact that she was a Florentine, gained her a welcome of applause. But this frightened her. There seems something menacing in these plaudits, when heard

for the first time; it is like the roar of a pleased lion. She was almost inaudible in the recitative; in the cavatina she gave them an inkling that she had a voice; but in the duet she sang out of tune. Her efforts were followed by an ominous silence; the connoisseurs in the parterre whispered and laughed together: the lorgnettes were levelled alternately at the Baroness, who was chatting with her cavalier, and at Lorini, who sat quite still, sometimes wiping his brow. The curtain fell without being followed by a call.

In the second act she was received in silence. Her eyes flashed, and her lips curled. Her timidity gave place to resolution. Her voice, mellow and pathetic, poured forth the recitative; a few irresolute hands began to applaud; they were silenced; in the scene with Pierrot she received a few *bravas;* but in the scene with the dissolute marquis, she achieved a decided success; the bitterness and scorn with which she sang

> "E' un tale che se mai giunge a scoprire,
> Vostre infami indegne mire.
> Ne dovrete ben tremar,
> Guai se v'ode, o trova qui!"

surprised the house, and M. de Beaumont declared

to the Baroness (who smiled a little uneasily) that her *Basta uscite* reminded him of Rachel's celebrated *Sortez.* All watched with interest for the last scene. All knew that this would be the test of her reputation.

When she received the malediction, she gave a shriek and fell, averting her face. She lay thus some moments. When she rose she was transformed. On her face was the vacant smile of the insane; her hair had fallen down, and she dabbled her hands in it, muttering to herself. Then she gave a horrible laugh and sang,

> "A consolarmi affrettisi momento sospirato,
> In faccia al cielo agli uomini tua sposa diverrò."

A shudder ran through the crowd. The Baroness left off flirting. A lady fainted and was carried out. Even the contralto was so frightened that she could scarcely sing. The curtain fell before a volcano of applause.

In the third act Maddalena, who had frozen them with horror, melted them with tears before she had sang a word. The Baroness had left the theatre before the commencement of the act. The débutante was called six times. The parterre stood on tiptoe

and shouted itself hoarse; cambric handkerchiefs were waved from boxes; the stage was strewn with flowers; and, best of all for her, Eugenio waiting for her in the dressing-room: he clasped her in his arms, and kissed her again and again.

When they went out into the street they found a multitude waiting to receive them; the horses had been taken out of Lorini's carriage; a dozen men stood between the shafts; a hundred wax lights illumined the strange procession which then took place. Noblemen and contadini strode along side by side, and hundreds of voices united in the final chorus of the opera.

CHAPTER V.

THE end of the Florentine season was at hand: it was the last reception night of the Baroness Sackowsky. Carriage after carriage thundered under her *porte-cochère.* Her crimson-and-gold salons were thronged with an unusual crowd. The garden so famed for its japonicas was illuminated.

The Baroness opened the evening by sitting down to the harp, and charmed all eyes as well as ears. Then she sang a duet with a tenor whose voice was unfortunately cracked. Next came a *basso profondo,* who sent down his voice so low that he could not recover it, making a fiasco. Other amateurs essayed their skill. A Neapolitan sang an *aria bouffa* in a dialect which was scarcely understood; a Piedmontese chanted a liberal hymn, which was understood too well. In fact, as is usually the case in Italy,

the audience was highly critical, the performance mediocre.

At midnight most of the people went away; the company that remained was small and select. It was chiefly composed of distinguished refugees from society at Paris, London, and Rome. The Baroness was above prejudice; besides, Florence has always been regarded as an Asylum for the Destitute (of virtue). There was a French marquise, a Polish countess, and an English lady with her cavalier, thus gracefully refuting the vulgar notion that those islanders never adapt themselves to the customs of the countries through which they pass. There were also one or two ladies who, like the Baroness herself, remained upon the visiting list of the Great World.

Among these was the Princess Pallidenese, one of those fortunate women who are allowed to set at defiance all rules of propriety, and even of etiquette. A comet of this kind makes its appearance once in an age, and pursues its erratic course, confusing all one's ideas upon the arrangement of the social system. So far from attempting to conceal her peccadilloes, the Princess seemed only anxious

to parade them. She was a *lusus societatis.* Everybody was surprised that she should be visited, and everybody visited her: possessing rank, wit, an immense fortune, and the posthumous reputation of her beauty; affectedly, or perhaps really, careless of the world's anathema—the world used it only against those who were foolish enough to imitate her; two or three of whom perished every season.

The Baroness led the way into the card-room; an ebony box was passed round containing *papirosses,* or Russian cigarettes. The ladies accepted these and lighted them at the men's cigars. Then there were eyes which flashed through the smoke, and little smothered laughs when the light would not come, and fingers which became entangled together, and all those *agaceries* which this sociable pleasure provokes. And then it was a pretty sight, those women lolling indolently in their chairs, curling their white arms as they raised their cigarettes, exhaling streamlets of blue smoke from between their rosy lips, and watching the ascending cloud with languid upturned eyes. But there were others who were not so idle, and who were attacking the enemy with light glances, piquant gestures, and

tender sighs, under cover of the smoke. Between the fingers and lips of a clever woman the cigarette may be made to have its language as eloquent as that of the fan in Spain.

Alphonse de Beaumont. "This is very delightful, Baroness: when shall we begin to imitate you Russians, and permit our women to smoke without disguise?"

The Baroness. "Never: with us it is a relic of Asiatic manners which we may abandon, but which you will never adopt. Already it is given up in Spain."

A Distinguished Traveller. "But preserved in Spanish South America, as it is throughout Africa and Asia. With the exception of women in Europe and the United States, the whole human family smokes."

The Princess. "In all countries there is some luxury which women are forbidden to enjoy. In one they are not allowed to smoke; nor in another to drink wine; nor in another to wear shoes; nor in another to have souls; nor in another to work; nor in another to amuse themselves."

The Distinguished Traveller. "Among cannibals they are not allowed to eat human flesh."

The Princess. "On the plea of refinement, I suppose. But we women are always slaves."

The Baroness. "You shall be our Toussaint l'Ouverture, my dear."

Alphonse de Beaumont. "I do not agree with you, Princess. We men have our spheres in active life; you have yours in the salon. Are you not queens there? In London, the *beau mondes* can only be entered *viâ* Almack's. The *entrées* to this paradise are in the hands of a committee of women, who thus build society of what materials they please. It is the same in France, and everywhere else; a young man who wishes to go into the world seeks a patroness, not a patron. Surely men may be allowed to manage the state, if their wives manage the salon."

The French Marquise. "Which is its ante-room."

The Princess. "Its ante-room, its dust-hole, its tribunal, its inquisition-chamber, its torture-room, its scaffold, its recruiting-market, its *hôpital des invalides,* its anything and everything you please. The state and the salon are one."

A German Statistician. "In England it is the people, not the salon. They bawl through the *Times,*

and the cabinet dares not put cotton into its ears. The *Times* is a wonderful publication: I have calculated that if all the letters——"

A cold shudder runs through the company. The Baroness hurriedly to the English lady. "Do women smoke in England?"

"In the middle classes, I believe not all; they think it vulgar. *We* smoke a great deal, but secretly. In country-houses it is very common to form a cigarette party in somebody's dressing-room, after we 'retire.' I see no reason why women should not smoke."

The Polish Countess. "It is quite a mistake to suppose that it spoils the teeth."

The Distinguished Traveller. "Among nations who smoke, the women are celebrated for their teeth. A negress, for instance, lives with a pipe in her mouth."

The German Statistician. "Tobacco has a curious history. In the——"

Here the Baroness asked some one if he had read the leader in the *Nazionale.* The conversation turned upon Napoleon and the Papal States; then upon the king, and the pecuniary stratagems of his

ministers. That great chimera of the age, *United Italy,* was touched upon that it might be ridiculed. Garibaldi was praised but pitied; then a caricature in the *Lampione* brought social topics upon the tapis. A military duel was discussed; the performances at the Pergola and the French theatre were criticised; and finally came the *chroniques scandaleuses* of the day. Of a separation to be arranged, or a marriage to be broken off; of three-cornered notes seen in confidence, or picked up by accident in the street; of looks intercepted in the mirror, and of letters betrayed by blotting-paper. Such are the mean elements which compose the jargon of the Florentine salon.

At half-past three, servants brought the ladies in their cloaks; the men took up their hats from a round table and lighted fresh cigars. The Baroness, shaking hands with them *à l'Anglaise,* escorted them to the ante-room. The ladies rolled off in their carriages; the gentlemen, enveloped in furs, sauntered down to the Jockey Club, where a small coterie of card-players was always to be found.

One lady, however, had remained behind. This was the Signora Pinsuti. The Baroness, having

suffered much from her, had determined to conciliate so dangerous a foe. She had succeeded perfectly. They were now very intimate. La Pinsuti spent her days and many of her nights beneath the roof of her dearest friend the Baroness Sackowsky.

It is an interesting fact that a lovely and insidious woman can dazzle her own sex with her beauty, and captivate them with her arts, as easily as she can our own. While men are struggling against one another in the great arenas of life, women enliven their harem-like forenoons by flirting desperately among themselves. The beauties are enthroned; each belle has her circle of admirers, who do her homage, and sometimes this homage becomes a passion. Mock marriages are made; though frequently they are real in all except the form. Then there are rivalries, jealousies, infidelities, and separations. As far as the sentiments and senses are concerned, many women can make themselves quite independent of our noble sex. Happily, men are always necessary, because they provide the coarser luxuries of life. The purse is in our hands. But were it not for that, I believe that women would often form republics resembling that of Lesbos in ancient times.

Women of a certain age are peculiarly susceptible to the charms of their own sex. The Signora Pinsuti was half toady half lover of the beautiful Baroness Sackowsky. But she was bound to her by something stronger than a merely sensual tie. As the confidante of the Baroness she was treated by young men with a deference to which she had long been a stranger. She rose in society. She became once more a personage. Friendship between men is an alliance of two minds to advance each other's interests; among women, to gratify each other's vanity. "Pride is the life of a woman, and flattery her daily bread." Olga Sackowsky was one of those women whose cupidity of praise is inexhaustible. Many women, stifled with adulation during the hours of society, are forced to content themselves at other times with the careless compliments of a husband or the hired homage of a maid. They alternate, like the Hottentots, between surfeit and starvation. The Baroness had now an admirer who could praise her beauty at every hour of the day and at every period of the toilette, and who could pay a tribute to those charms of which women are none the less proud because they must veil them from the sight of men.

They went up together arm-in-arm into the Baroness's chamber. It was a large and lofty room: a lustre of Venetian glass hung from the painted ceiling; the floor was carpeted; the walls were hung with crimson silk. The bedstead stood in regal splendour in an alcove which it almost filled. It was of old walnut wood, splendidly carved, and decorated with ornaments in brass. The curtains were of silk, crimson lined with white; the pillows were trimmed with lace; and an eider-down coverlet floated upon the bed. A cabinet of ebony, inlaid with ivory; a toilet-table, on which was a dressing-case filled with pomades, cosmetics, white powder for the cheeks, and black powder for the eyes; a huge mirror; a sofa, and some easy-chairs; and a wood fire burning briskly in the grate, complete my description of this nest of beauty.

The Baroness rang her bell, and a girl entered the room. Her eyes were small, very dark, and near the root of the nose, as in some animals. Her eyebrows, which were black and shaggy, joined each other. Her lips were pale and thin. Her chin was pointed. Her natural voice was harsh and loud; but, like

most female servants, when she spoke with her mistress it was in an artificial tone.

"Julie, you can go to bed," said the Baroness. "I shall not want you to-night." The soubrette obeyed, with a side look at the Signora Pinsuti, who now proceeded to fulfil the duties of a femme de chambre. With much rustling, she disrobed the Baroness of her silk and steel, the graceful armour of the salon. The jewels were laid in their white satin beds. The flowers were cast aside. The Baroness went to the mirror; her long hair, set at liberty, fell down her back in streams. The signora combed it carefully out, sometimes stooping to kiss the white shoulders which gleamed beneath. Finally, the night toilette was completed. The two women, in long white dresses trimmed with Brussels lace, sat down before the fire: the Baroness in an arm-chair, La Pinsuti on a foot-stool.

"Do you feel sleepy, dear?" asked the latter.

"Not at all. Let us sit here and chat."

"How did you like the evening?"

The Baroness pouted. "Is it not too tiresome that I can find no one to sing with me?"

"It used not to be so once."

"You are referring to Lorini, I suppose. Well, he did sing charmingly, I will say that for him; and his accompaniment was perfect inspiration."

Pinsuti was silent, but watchful. The Baroness was looking sullenly into the fire. "Bah!" she said, shrugging her shoulders, "the world is large. I shall go to London for the summer, and spend next winter, I think, at Paris."

"That is very strange."

"That I should go to England? But I always go there for the season."

"*He* is going there too."

"He! who? Lorini?"

"So I heard to-night. I wonder that the Princess Pallidenese did not tell you."

The Princess had told her, and it was for that reason that she had asked Pinsuti to stop the night. "What is he going there for?" she asked.

"You must know that yesterday a stranger arrived at the Hôtel de l'Europe. The people there found that he had been credited at the bank to a fabulous amount of money. Curiosity and conjectures. Some said that he was the Prince of Wales travelling incognito as he did in America; others, that he was

a speculator who had come to buy up a few streets for lodging-houses and hotels. Well, my dear, this man, who had brought only a portmanteau and a carpet-bag, dined at the table d'hôte like an ordinary mortal, and went afterwards to the Pergola. He listened to *Linda di Chamouni* without moving a muscle of his face; but after the performance, he requested an interview with Restoni, introduced himself as the manager of the Opera-house at London, and engaged her for the season."

"Yes; and he is going with her?"

"Of course."

"You think that he is really in love with her."

"What can one think?" He is with her from morning till night."

"People have made advances to him, have they not?"

"Oh yes. Formerly he might have been the lover of the peasant girl, but now he is only the friend and patron of the prima donna."

"And he refuses all invitations?"

"Always. But you must have heard of his musical receptions; they are very exclusive affairs; they are only private concerts, it is true. He seldom speaks

to his guests. But it is very difficult to get a card."

"Now tell me, what do you think will be the end of this affair?"

"Oh, it will go on till he gets tired of her, and then of course he will give her up. To be sure, it is just possible that he may marry her."

"Lorini marry a singer!"

"She might be content to live on with him as she is doing now; but the father, they say, has brains. In England she will have offers of marriage; Restoni will hint to him that he is bound in honour to leave her free, or to marry her himself. Now, under such circumstances, the wisest man (which Lorini has not shown himself to be) will often do a foolish thing."

The Baroness shifted uneasily about. "That would be abominable," said she.

"Why, Olga, I declare I believe that you are in love with him."

"Heavens, Clara! I in love with a man! How can you be so absurd?"

"You ought to be glad if he married her, it would punish him so severely."

"Yes, but it would not punish her. Cannot you understand how I hate that girl. I do not care for Lorini, except as one must care for anything that one has lost. This creature stole him from me, and wounded my vanity. Now that her vanity is worth wounding, I should like to return the compliment."

"So you shall, my dear."

"You will assist me?"

"To be sure I will."

"And you think we shall succeed?"

"It is almost certain."

"By what means?"

"By making them quarrel."

"But how?"

The Signora Pinsuti took a little foot between her hands. The Baroness, tenderly caressing her cheek, looked down upon her with curiosity and contempt.

"At present it is impossible. They live together; they are seldom out of each other's sight; if they quarrel one moment, they become reconciled the next. A reasonable man would have grown satiated with her long ago; but poor Lorini has become bucolized, it seems."

"It is quite a pastoral episode, is it not?" said the Baroness, a little bitterly. "But how are you going to make them quarrel?"

"But on the other hand, when people live apart, nothing is easier than to produce a rupture. Suppose, for instance, that you are a mutual friend. You affect sympathy, and gain the confidence of each. They complain to you of each other—lovers always do. 'What a pity it is that Roderigo plays so high.' You defend him warmly. She attacks him again, to have the pleasure of hearing him defended. You repeat these things, correctly if you please, but colouring them differently. Mere words are nothing; everything depends upon the tone. If nothing is said, you can invent. He is offended;—half love is made up of vanity. She observes a coolness in his manner; she asks the reason. He cannot, of course, explain, and therefore denies it. She repays him in the same coin. You secretly advise each of them to be firm. A man is never respected by a woman if he allows her to tyrannize over him; if a woman once cedes to her lover's fits of ill temper, he will become unbearable. He shortens his visits. She keeps him waiting when he comes. Now the misunderstanding

is fairly established: the wedge is in. He writes her an affectionate letter; you intercept it. He discontinues his visits. She writes an affectionate letter; you intercept it. She is determined not to receive him. If need be, you forge a letter or two, and the affair is at an end."

"But, my dear, forging letters and intercepting them, these are such stale tricks. Why, they are quite used up even on the stage."

"They may be used up for the stage, but they are still efficacious in real life, I can assure you."

"Well, but after all, this plan of yours requires heavy 'properties,' as they say on the stage. In the first place, they live together."

"They will not always live together."

"When they go to England——"

"They will live apart."

"Who will make them?"

"The father, if we wish it."

"Why?"

"Because he loves himself, and hates Lorini. We will make it to his interest to separate them, and he will do it. He is no fool."

"Good: we will suppose that they are living apart. But where are we to find the confidant?"

"In this house."

"Whom do you mean?"

"How long have you had that girl, Julia, in your service?"

"Only a week. She brought me a written character from an English lady, whose name I have forgotten."

"Have you got the character?"

"Yes."

"Is it addressed to you?"

"No."

"Very well. Now, have you any of Lorini's letters?"

"Yes," said the Baroness, smiling. "I hide letters, but I never destroy them."

"You are wise; let me see some of them, will you, and then I will explain to you my plan of battle."

* * * * *

It was midnight. The opera was over, and the streets were deserted. The city was sinking into sleep.

Eugenio and Maddalena were seated on the steps of the Uffizi Palace. Beside them stood the David and the Perseus, masterpieces of the middle ages. These grand works of art present a glaring and prosaic appearance by day; but by moonlight the naked marble appears to glow with life. These statues are no longer stones but souls; traditions whisper round them; they become the ghosts of a glorious past.

"Art thou happy, Maddalena?"

"Ah, Eugenio, thou lovest me," she replied.

They were silent again—if to be silent is not to speak. But there are dialogues without words which impassion the heart, which intoxicate the brain, which fill the mind with a sadness which is not from sorrow, as the senses may be steeped in a languor which is not from fatigue.

As they sat thus conversing with each other's souls, and looking tenderly upon the stars, Eugenio sighed and said—

"My darling, we must soon leave these bright skies for the English fogs and rain. Canst thou be happy in a cold land?"

"Ah, what do I care for the clouds in the sky, if there be none upon thy face. Thou art my sun,

Eugenio. Shine on me, and my heart will be always warm."

"And wilt thou love me always?"

"Oh, Engenio, dost thou doubt me?"

"Maddalena, thou art standing on the steps of a throne. As soon as thou art seated, temptations will encircle thee like courtiers, and——"

She placed her little hand upon his lips. "Oh, say no more. Eugenio, when I look down into my heart, I cannot see the end of my love for thee. It is unfathomable as it is unutterable. What can I say? I love thee—that is all."

Then they sat together, hand in hand, and raked the past for secrets to tell, and for emotions to confess. It was a kind of marriage, that—they undressed their hearts before each other. How sweet is that moment when a woman conquers her timidity and reticence, and says, "On such a day, I first discovered that I loved you."

They were interrupted, but not disagreeably. Some young men, who had been supping together after the theatre, were going home, and were singing, as they went along, the air of the opera which they had just heard. They passed close by our lovers,

but without seeing them. Arm in arm, their long hair tossing on their shoulders, and their faces raised to the sky, they sang, at that moment, the final chorus from Linda—

> "Sempre uniti noi saremo,
> Per amarci sol vivi amo.
> Fia per noi la terra Eliso,
> Delle gioje e dell' amor."

"It is a prophecy!" cried Eugenio, flinging his arms round her, and drawing her upon his breast.

"Eugenio!" she murmured, with a choking voice; "what dost thou mean?"

A moment more, and he would have made her his betrothed, when there was a Sound. They sprang apart and listened. A harsh and dolorous chant rose loudly in the air. At the corner of the street opposite, the flames of torches fell with a lurid glare against the wall. Then a horrible procession came in view. Men dressed in loose, white robes, like grave-clothes, walked in front, bearing torches in their hands, and singing the song of Death. They were followed by others, who bore a coffin, over which floated a black banner, adorned with the ghastly insignia of death.

It is a law in Florence, that all corpses shall be taken to the Asilo Mortuario, or dead-house, and exposed there before burial. Maddalena had never conquered that feeling of terror with which all women view these processions for the first time. When in the Via Larga she heard the distant dirge, she would break off abruptly in the midst of music, or conversation, throw open the *persiani*, and follow the funeral with her eyes till the last white robe had disappeared, shuddering all the while. This morbid impulse she had frequently tried to conquer, but in vain.

Now she sat as if spell-bound, her eyes rolling and dilating, and muttering to herself, "*It is a prophecy!*"

CHAPTER VI.

MADDALENA, her father, and Lorini were seated in the London train. It glided from the Dover station, the sea glimmering in the distance, and the sun sinking in the sky.

There were two other persons in the same compartment. One of them had a sketch-book on his knees, and rapidly outlined therein the scenes which they flew by. His pencil was well employed—for these lingering twilights of the north are rich in their effects of light and shade. The sunset clouds though less gorgeous than those of our Italy, have tints peculiar to themselves, and remain longer in the sky. Fantastic shadows fall from the waving trees, and play upon the earth; the meadows have a soft and tender hue; even the hideous brick-houses reflect prettily in water towards the close of day. And then there comes creeping upon the air, a calm,

grey, vaporous chiaroscuro—neither night nor light; the dim fades into dusk; the dusk deepens into dark; the sky becomes ebony; the white stars shine forth, and the yellow moon rolls upward in the sky.

When it became too dark to look at the country, Maddalena and Eugenio began whispering together. Restoni, who was excluded from this tender conversation, who had no talent for silence, and who desired to improve his English, determined to broach his *vis-à-vis*. This was a typical Briton; hair and whiskers carefully brushed; linen of glossy whiteness; square features, cold, grey eyes, a blue chin, and his neck imprisoned in a large starched cravat. When he had finished the evening paper, he looked at his watch, and then out of window. Restoni caught his eye with some difficulty, and made an observation. The Englishman replied with a chilling monosyllable. Restoni returned to the attack, and his opponent sought safety in retreat, charging over to the vacant seat. The three Italians looked at each other with raised eyebrows, and from the artist in the corner came a shrill, sneering laugh. They all turned and observed, for the first time, this singular looking man.

He was tall and thin, his face of a ghastly bloodless pallor, but smooth and lustrous as Carrara stone; his hair was long; a black and glossy beard fell low upon his breast; his nose was aquiline; his hands were small and covered with blue veins; his mouth thin-lipped and satirical; his eyes black, deep-set, and extremely bright, but they were keen, rather sunny—they flamed, rather than shone. He was dressed in black, with elegance, though with some singularity. Taking the vacated seat, he said to Restoni,

"This, I presume, sir, is your first visit to England?"

"It is, sir."

"I thought so. You have committed a fatal error. You have addressed an Englishman abruptly. You should never do that, sir. You paralyse his brain at once. You should prepare him for the shock by treading on his foot, and begging his pardon, or by borrowing his newspaper (he will not offer it to you); by asking him if he would mind the window being down, and so on; and then begin with him gently by talking about the weather. Your neighbour did not mean to insult you, I am sure. Pray excuse him for

his ignorance. He would, doubtless, behave like a gentleman, if he knew how."

While Maddalena was translating this remarkable speech to Lorini, the artist amused himself by looking into the other Englishman's face.

"Monsieur speaks French," asked Lorini.

The artist bowed.

"I think, then, that he does his compatriots injustice. I have met Englishmen in trains and at tables-d'hôte, and I have remarked that they were generally the first to commence the conversation."

"Yes, that is a curious fact. Though there are some who travel from English hotel to English hotel, protected by their couriers from all who do not speak our language, yet the Englishman, as a rule, is very sociable abroad. It is in England that he is so reserved. He is frozen by the contact of his countrymen."

"And the women?"

"Bah! the women are everywhere the same."

"Do they dress nicely?" asked Maddalena.

"The upper classes, *à la Parisienne;* the middle, *à la diable.*"

"Are they virtuous?" asked Lorini.

"More so in England than when they are abroad," was the ambiguous reply.

"I have heard that they are very beautiful, your English women," said Maddalena.

"*Ecoutez!* I have travelled all over the world, and I am an artist. Well, the most remarkable beauties that I have seen have been a young Jewess, with blue eyes and black hair, in Morocco—a child of twelve (she had just been married), in the South Sea Islands; and a Georgian girl, in the market-place at —— Bah! I forget the name. But these were exceptions. The American girls are perhaps prettier than English girls; but they soon fade. The Parisian women preserve their attractions when the English women have become dowdies; but still, speaking of nations in the aggregate, and of women at all ages, I think that the English, in mere animal beauty, at all events, deserve the palm. Their complexions are unrivalled."

"And their minds—they are clever, are they not?" asked Lorini.

"In comparing European societies, one should always bear in mind that the *beau-monde* is everywhere the same. You find in the *haute noblesse* of

all countries the same elegance and refinement of form, the same exquisite grace of manner, the same lofty politeness—smooth, cold, glittering, and transparent as ice. Our women of the aristocracy, who pass their lives in a crowd, who encounter fresh minds every day, soon acquire tact, that virtue which is in women what energy is in men. They are also compelled to gather information. Many a woman who cares neither for music, literature, nor art, goes regularly to the opera and to concerts, reads the new books, and passes hours in the Royal Academy, that she may not appear more ignorant than her rivals. The study of art as a mere fashion has been sneered at a good deal, but one should be glad that ignorance is not the fashion, as it was once, and as it still remains, to a great degree, among our middle classes. Ah, there you will see the British female in all her glory. The wife of a well-to-do tradesman, or, in many cases, professional man, is little better than an upper servant in the house. She is an amiable compound of a sempstress and a kitchen maid—half sewing-machine, half turnspit. She can be eloquent only on the economy of joints, and on the mysteries of cross-stitch and tatting, and on the dispositions

and diseases of her children. The German women are as good housewives, and yet are extremely well-informed. It is because they darn and read at the same time. The Englishwoman is not capable of this. Having been taught at school accomplishments of the most showy kind, she stagnates as soon as she has secured a husband, and devotes her life to duties of a domestic, that is to say, an almost menial nature. The cause of all this lies in the ignorance and prejudices of the men in the middle classes. They have a horror of clever women, and believe that the cultivation of the mind unfits a woman for household slavery.

"*Quelle existence!*" cried Lorini, and asked Maddalena in Italian if she would like to lead such a life. She replied that she thought she could please him better by learning airs to sing to him, or by reading books to speak of to him, than by cooking his dinner, or sewing his clothes, which a hired servant could do as well. Then she blushed, for she had answered her own thoughts.

Restoni having observed a slight curl of the artist's lip, said to him quickly, in Italian,

"You speak our language, sir?"

"Perfectly," he replied, with a Roman accent.

Maddalena blushed again. Lorini burst out laughing.

"Let us introduce ourselves," said he. "This is the Signorina Restoni, who has the honour of being engaged at the London Opera; that is the Signor Restoni; and I, the Marchese dei Lorini, have the honour to be their friend."

"And benefactor," said Maddalena.

The artist having told them that his name was Maynard Jenoure, said, with a courteous smile, "I have the pleasure of knowing you both by name. The Signorina Restoni has already been spoken of in our journals; and you, Marchese, I have heard of from the Countess of Conway, whom perhaps you remember."

"Ah, who could forget her and her charming evenings. Did you also know her at Florence?"

"No; here in England and at Rome. I have not been at Florence since I was a poor pedestrian artist, studying the galleries."

There are few things so agreeable as a conversation with a stranger who proves to be a friend of our friends. Jenoure was acquainted with almost all the

distinguished Romans and English who had been in the habit of visiting Florence. They accordingly met on common ground, and exchanged anecdotes and impressions. Maddalena listened to them with interest. Her eyes turned from one to the other, as they spoke, but rested longest on Lorini. Her ears drank in his words. They revealed to her a fresh phase in his mind. She had learnt enough of the world during her Pergola career to understand much of what he said. She was amazed by his knowledge of this life, which she did not know. She did not observe that he was outshone by his companion. She felt proud of him as she listened, and also she loved him more, for she now began to understand the sacrifice which he had made for her.

"Lady Conway will be in ecstacies to see you again," said Jenoure.

"Ye-es," said Lorini, and then as if plucking up sudden courage, he added; "but I do not suppose that I shall have that pleasure. I have brought no letters, and, indeed, have made up my mind not to go out into the world, here."

He glanced at Maddalena as he spoke. She replied with a grateful look.

Jenoure's lip curled again.

"We are nearly there," said he.

They looked out and saw above the horizon a dim red haze, like the dawn of a dull day. They seemed to pass a station every moment. The engine whistled continually. They skimmed over houses, which peered up at them with a thousand lighted eyes, and from among which rose huge chimneys, vomiting smoke. Sometimes the train stopped, and then they smelt the breath of the city from beneath, and heard its low sullen roar.

They glided past hissing engines, and shunted trucks, and large gaunt buildings, with windows for their roofs; through a chaos of sights, a Pandemonium of sounds, till they stopped again—this time upon a bridge. Below them lay the black and silent Thames. Within its waters danced the distorted reflections of the stars, and on its banks were high, dark, sombre buildings—by day curious, by night sublime—containing within their breasts the riches of the world.

Eugenio and Maddalena felt the strange beauty of this scene. Their hands instinctively came together. The Englishman looked at his watch, and put his

head out of window to find out why they had stopped. Jenoure absorbed everything with one rapid professional glance, and opened his sketch-book. Then his eye fell on Restoni, who was thinking, with sometimes an askant look at the happy pair. Jenoure made some quick strokes upon the paper, and wrote under it in pencil, "*Treachery.*" Then he broke the silence by offering to become their cicerone while they remained in London; and in the midst of apologies, assurances, compliments, and thanks, the train entered the terminus.

Jenoure took them to one of those monster hotels which have lately sprung up in London, in imitation of the Louvre and the Grand at Paris, where the visitors appear to be numberless, and where they really are but numbers; where the coffee-room is a wilderness, the corridors a maze; where you are taken to your chamber by machinery, and have your breakfast ordered by electric telegraph. These establishments form fine monuments of our colossal age: they are the Pyramids of progress. Huge though they be, their proportions are exact, and their inner movements are directed with clock-work regularity. Printed notices anticipate every ques-

tion, and a routine is laid down as precise and inexorable as that of a jail.

They went up to their respective chambers to make a hasty toilette; Maddalena was assisted by her new French maid, a girl named Julie, who had offered her services to the Restoni just before they left Florence. She had left the service of her late mistress because she was afraid of the miasma at Rome, where that lady had gone. Personal application therefore had been impossible, nor had it been necessary, as the girl brought an excellent two years' character in writing, dated but a few weeks back. Julie had previously passed a twelve-month in England, and spoke the language very well. Maddalena had at first conceived a great antipathy against her; but the almost sisterly attention with which the girl had taken care of her during their weary voyage—her gentleness, her quickness, and attention, her evident anxiety to please—had made the good-hearted child quite fond of her.

She had even begun to tell her secrets; this gave her intense pleasure; she had never possessed a female confidante; and no woman's happiness is

complete without one. There are always plenty of little things which one cannot tell even to one's lover; and women, though they can hermetically seal themselves before the world, are communicative by nature, and love to be able to uncork their minds, and empty the contents into some female ear.

Maddalena was nearly dressed when her father came into the room, and said, "My daughter, I wish to speak to thee seriously for a little while." Julie discreetly moved towards the door. Restoni told her that she could remain.

"Thou art aware, Maddalena," said he, "that I have never interfered with thy wishes; I have acquiesced in them always, have I not?"

"Yes, dearest father, it is true."

"And if now I ask from thee a favour, it is not for my own sake but for thine. It is because I wish to protect thee from false rumours, and from evil tongues."

Maddalena became disquieted; a vague feeling of anxiety stole over her.

"I have been speaking with this English gentleman about our future plans. He has given me the most kind advice. He says that it will be better for

us to take apartments than to live in this hotel. We shall be more comfortable, and it will be less expensive. We will live together, my daughter; and thy reputation shall be secure."

"Yes, father."

"He says, also, that he can recommend a suite of apartments for the Marchese dei Lorini, where he can live as befits his rank and——"

"What! Is not Eugenio to live with us? Why, are we to be separated then? Oh, he will never consent to it—he will never consent to it."

"My child, he will consent to it; for he will listen to our reasons, and he will be convinced. We are not now in Italy; we are in cold, prudish England. My beloved, as soon as it became known that a young nobleman was living in the same house with thee, thy honour would be tarnished, thy name would be polluted. Say, Julie, you who have lived in England, do I not speak the truth?"

"It is quite true, signorina," said Julie; "this England is an abominable country. Giuglini was hissed at a provincial town because his name had een coupled with a woman's. If they treat men

so, you may imagine how much mercy women are likely to receive."

Maddalena hung her head.

"In the theatre, signorina, you will have rivals; you will have enemies. They will seek for a flaw in you. If they find you impregnable, as an artist, they will attack you as a woman. They will organize a claque; they will bribe critics; your name will be whispered in the coulisses, and paraded in the papers. You will be caricatured in the shop-windows. People will refuse to take their daughters to hear you; the manager will protest that you are ruining him, and he will make you go. To be driven from other countries you must break the laws—here it is only necessary to infringe a convenance."

"This girl is a treasure," muttered Restoni.

Maddalena did not reply. She was conquered. A woman's reputation is as dear to her as a man's honour is to him. She dreads the accusation of vice, as he dreads the accusation of a crime. There is a taint in such calumny which can never be shaken off.

After a little while she said, "Oh, how angry he will be."

"Why should the Marchese be angry?" said Julie.

"He can spend all his time with you. Surely it does not matter where he lives."

Maddalena sighed.

Jenoure dined with them, and slept at the hotel. As soon as they were by themselves, Restoni, in his silky voice, spoke of the apartments which he and his daughter would take, and hoped that their noble benefactor would find some that would suit him close to them. Lorini started, coloured, and looked at Maddalena, whose eyes sunk under his, as if she were ashamed.

"I had hoped," he said, in a bitter voice, "to have had the honour of residing under the same roof with you; but, as I see that it will be more agreeable to you to——"

"Oh, father, explain—explain!" said Maddalena.

Restoni began to explain. Lorini sat smoking, sulkily avoiding the tender looks of Maddalena. But what could he say? He was annoyed, but could not deny the apparent justice of Restoni's arguments. Neither he nor Maddalena were aware that in London there is more liberty for an unmarried woman than in any other European city; and that the subscribers to the opera give themselves no con-

cern about the private characters of singers, except in those rare cases when the latter, having married, are ambitious of entering their society. Restoni having left the room, Maddalena crept up to Eugenio. She soothed his ruffled temper with a voice as soft as balm; she consoled him with the tenderest caresses; flinging her arms round him, she declared that she would not let him go till he had smiled on her again. And Eugenio, smiling, said that he would never smile again; he would rather suffer imprisonment for life. Maddalena blushed; these words touched the hope in which her heart was wrapped.

In the meantime, Restoni went up to his room, where he found Julie waiting, in her bonnet and shawl.

"Well," she asked; "what message am I to take?"

"Tell her that all is well. The establishment is divided."

"And I shall have the pink dress!" cried Julie, who executed some brilliant steps of a picturesque dance, known in Paris as the *can-can*, and which she concluded by kicking Restoni's hat off his head without grazing his forehead—the climax of choregraphic art.

The next day, under Jenoure's guidance, the Restoni located themselves in Albemarle Street, Lorini in Bury Street, St. James'. They had arrived in England on the fourteenth of April, a fortnight before the date of the engagement. The manager paid them a visit, and showed them his programme of the season. Maddalena, if successful, would have to sing in several operas—for, in London, the same work is rarely repeated two consecutive nights.

The English call April the month of showers; it is really a month of storms. It rained almost incessantly. Having no temptation to go out, Maddalena and Eugenio commenced a severe course of study. She would probably have to sing in Roberto, the Huguenots, Fidelio, and Don Giovanni—operas which she only knew by name, and which even Eugenio had never seen performed. Accordingly, they passed most of their time at the piano when, on the fifth day, as she was singing the scales, she found that she could not sound some of her middle notes. There was a gap in her voice.

They were all terribly alarmed; there have been instances when singers have awoke to find themselves voiceless. Jenoure came in at that moment and

offered to take them to a doctor, in whose talents he had confidence. It was not yet noon; they would be sure of finding him at home. They drove to a large gloomy house in the neighbourhood of Portman Square. On the door was a brass-plate with *Charles Darlington, M.D.*, engraved upon it. The hall was almost filled by long forms, like those which are used at school, and on which were huddled up together a number of wretched-looking men and women.

"Faugh!" cried Jenoure, as the footman showed them into the room beyond; "I had forgotten that this was his 'free patients'' day, and that we should have to run this gauntlet of sights and smells."

"Does your friend see these poor creatures out of charity?" asked Maddalena.

"Oh, yes; he is benevolence itself, you must know. All doctors begin by taking in free patients; they serve as advertisements, and as subjects for experiment. But few keep them on as this gentleman has done, after earning a reputation."

"He is celebrated?" asked Lorini.

"Pretty well, for a young man. He is an examiner at the College of Physicians; a lecturer at one of

the medical schools; a Fellow of the Royal Society, and does a large private practice."

As he was speaking, Dr. Darlington came in. He was a man of about thirty years of age; soft, rather sad, blue eyes, high forehead, and golden hair, which must have once been beautiful, but which was very thin. His mouth was sweet and pensive; his voice gentle and subdued, as if from the habit of speaking to those who suffer. He shook hands warmly with the artist, and welcomed him back to England. Jenoure having explained to him the object of their visit, he invited them into his consulting room.

This chamber presented a curious aspect to Italian eyes. The walls were one mass of books, classified and labelled, so that every volume could be referred to without delay. The side-tables were covered with bottles, containing acids, or preparations, instruments, and lamps. On the centre table was a desk with writing materials, a pile of recipe papers, a stethoscope, and an open book. Before it, a round chair, which turned on its own pivot; beneath it, a huge waste-paper basket. A mirror, a small lavatory, a couch, and some easy chairs, completed the furniture of this lair of science.

Bidding Maddalena sit down, the doctor fastened a reflecting-mirror to his forehead, and taking a small round mirror by its ebony handle, he passed it to and fro in the flame of a spirit lamp. Jenoure burst out laughing. "Mutter a prescription," he said, "and you will have quite the air of one of the witches in Macbeth." Maddalena looked a little alarmed. "Don't be afraid," said the doctor; "I make use of this formidable apparatus to catch a glimpse of your larynx by reflection. I can only succeed by putting one mirror in your throat (I warm it, by-the-by, that it may not be dimmed by your breath) and another on my own forehead. The laryngoscope, as we call it, was invented by Professor Manuel Garcia, the brother of the celebrated Malibran, that he might study the mechanism of the human voice." Here Maddalena looked quite reassured. "Lean back a little, if you please. I touch my cheek with the heated mirror to make sure that I shall not burn you; I introduce it gently into your throat, so, and I unriddle the mystery at once."

"And what is the mystery?" asked Maddalena.

"The larynx," he replied, "is a kind of box which contains a musical apparatus composed of a tube

like a reed, and of strings like those of a violin. Now, your vibrating strings or *vocal cords* instead of being tense, are limp and relaxed, probably from the dampness of a climate to which you are as yet unaccustomed. In attempting to sound certain notes, therefore, you attempt to play a violin with its strings unstretched. But I can soon restore them their tensity by means of a slight electric shock."

The battery was charged, the wire adjusted, and the shock given. Maddalena tried her voice. It was restored as if by magic. She rose to take her leave, and (instructed by Lorini) offered him a fee.

"No," said he, bowing, "I never take fees from artists, for I pretend to be one myself."

"Which is mere pretension," said Jenoure.

"Oh, we doctors are true artists, though in a very humble way. You imitate the aspects of nature; we her inner operations. You attempt to improve upon nature creative; you combine a dozen landscapes into one, and fabricate a beautiful woman from half-a-dozen models. Well we improve upon nature restorative: for instance, she can amputate a limb, she can heal a disease unassisted, but we having studied in her school, have learnt with our instru-

ments and drugs to surpass our mistress. We do more than that, we rectify her misfits. She sends blind people into the world, we give them sight; deaf people, we bestow on them the sense of hearing; cripples, we present them with the use of their limbs. She does not put enough iron in their blood, or lime in their bones, or phosphorus in their brains; we remedy these defects—or, at least, we try. Our efforts are very feeble, so are yours. Then nature has a malignant side: we fight against it with the weapons which she herself has given us; we attempt to purify her breath, and to find antidotes against her poisons."

"All that is very ingenious, my dear Sangrado: but why you should call yourself an artist because you have cured an artist's voice, any more than a plumber who mends a broken wire in a piano should call himself a musician, I cannot understand. However, I think that this lady will feel uncomfortable if you do not take your fee."

"Then we will compromise the matter," said Darlington. "Please to put the money in that box, and you will have the pleasure of knowing that you have spent it well. Some ladies in this neigh-

bourhood have just established a charitable institution which I should like to see in every London district. It is a kitchen. Every doctor has a number of patients whose real malady is hunger. Nursing mothers suffer much from insufficient nourishment, and nothing is more common than for convalescents to relapse into illness from the same cause. Such cases as these, which cannot be retained in the hospitals, I furnish with diet-tickets, and they receive meat, soup, &c., till they are restored to perfect health.

Maddalena doubled the fee before she dropped it into the little box. Jenoure laughed.

"O noble philanthropist! Howard of the hospitals! Extractor of the world's decayed teeth! Wilt thou be human as thou art humane and dine with me to day?"

Darlington assented. They dined at the Travellers, and afterwards went to Albemarle Street. Tea was served; our friends had already learned to esteem this delightful beverage, which should be drunk only in three European countries—Russia, Holland, and Great Britain. Then Maddalena sang.

"What a noble voice," whispered Darlington.

"I knew that it must be very powerful, from the size of the larynx. But what sweetness and expression! Is the Marchese engaged to her?"

"I hope not."

"You hope not. Why?"

"Because I have taken a liking to him, and such a marriage would be his ruin."

"If they love each other?"

"Precisely for that reason,—what is love but mental alienation? A sensible man marries from forethought, not from impulse. He chooses a woman of congenial tastes and amiable disposition, whom he will always be able to converse with as a friend. Or if he is rich and can afford a luxury, he marries a beautiful and elegant woman to keep his house and entertain his friends. If he be a wealthy bourgeois he takes a woman of family; if a man of rank, of slender means, he marries a wealthy bourgeoise. Thus a man takes into his firm a sleeping partner (excuse the old joke) who contributes to its welfare, and improves the business. But marriage for love! Why, *mon cher*, I am astonished to hear you speak of such a thing. Parsons' daughters and gentlemen farmers may

sometimes perpetrate it in the country, but believe me, in London it is quite exploded. Matrimonial romance is dead in England; young ladies who wish to get married do not feed their imagination with sentimental novels; they divide their lovers' monies by their own expenditure; an opera-box and brougham into 300*l.* a-year *won't go,* as we used to say at school. Well, and are they not wise? Is it not better that they should begin life without illusions, than have them afterwards stripped off one by one?"

"No," said Darlington, "it is not better. I do not like those characters who begin life with the cold wisdom, the distrust, the calculating spirit of those who end it."

Jenoure shrugged his shoulders. "When an illusion is torn off," he said, "the branch is made to bleed. What misery a marriage for love entails! The one loved is always clothed with ideal qualities by the one who loves. For instance, here is a plain little girl whom Lorini no doubt believes to be a beauty. I passed a very dull half-hour with her the other day. Lorini, I am sure, finds her conversation brilliant. On the other hand, he is a gentleman,

good-looking, agreeable, refined, and, I think, has the germs of genius within him, if he would only dig his mind and let the sun come in. But in her eyes, bless you, he is not a man at all. Well, suppose they marry; after a little time their wings fall off, and immediately, in a rage, they clap on each other a tail and cloven hoofs. As soon as they find out that they have not married angels, they are wedded to demons forthwith; they are disappointed, therefore rancorous and unjust; they exaggerate faults as once they exaggerated virtues, and see all things through green glass, as once they saw all through a prism. They begin to hate each other, for hatred is often but love worn threadbare; and after that, in ordinary cases, they settle down into indifference, bid farewell to their illusions, or cast them round other idols. A marriage for love between equals is foolish enough, you see. Now add to all these disenchantments the after-torments of a *mésalliance*, and you will understand why I hope that the Marchese dei Lorini is not engaged to the Signorina Maddalena Restoni."

"How can two persons be happy," said Darlington, "if they marry without love,—condemned to pass

their lives together, chained to each other like two galley-slaves?"

"Admirable metaphor!" cried Jenoure. "What is life, in fact, but penal servitude. When you are tired of working alone, from the mere hunger of change you yearn for a companion. They chain you to one; at first you are delighted; then you begin to weary a little; you wish to be again alone. With this companion you must eat, you must work, you must sleep. You have no freedom, even for a moment. The clank of the chain is always in your ears. She twists it so that it may gall you. You are tired, you wish to lie down; but she is restless; she will not allow you to enjoy a repose which she does not wish to share. You have energy; you wish to work out of hours; you wish to distinguish yourself, though only a convict; but she desires to sleep; she will not move, she clogs you, and forces you to sit down by her in sullen despair. You can escape only when she dies, or when she dishonours you. For married people the present is agreeable, and its future encouraging, is it not?"

"Oh, Maynard, why do you say things which you do not mean? Why do you jeer at everything

which is good and holy in the world? Why do you take such pains to distort yourself? It is a strange hypocrisy, for hypocrisy I see it is. You have made yourself hated, and——"

"Sought after," said Jenoure, with a sneer.

Their *sotto voce* conversation was interrupted by Maddalena. She had just received a letter, which she handed to them. It was a request to sing at a concert for the benefit of destitute Italians; it would be given on the third of May, and the consent of the manager would therefore be required; but Jenoure assured her that in all such cases it was cheerfully accorded.

During the next fortnight the doctor and the artist spent almost all their leisure time with the Florentines. The dull routine of sight-seeing was enlivened by the caustic wit of Jenoure, who satirized all ages, and by the eloquence of Darlington, whose memory overflowed with legends, and who tinted many an unshapely building, many a dark back street, with the light of associations. It was curious to hear this artist, whose genius was of so romantic though morbid a kind (he had been called the Edgar Poe of painting), speaking always as a

cold materialist, while the man of science had the art of extracting poetry from every stone. But it is often thus. The artist pours out his sap in solitude upon his works, and leaves only the bitter stalk behind; while men condemned to prosaic pursuits reserve their stores of sentiment to sweeten social life.

Eugenio had fascinated Jenoure: Maddalena preferred Darlington. She was repelled from the former by his bitter remarks, and by the expression of his lips. She did not appreciate his genius; women, if they dislike a man, do not admire him. But Darlington's kindliness of heart, his self-devotion which he attempted to conceal, but which penetrated through every pore of his life; his sad eyes, his low, sweet, dreamy voice, which seemed laden with the memories of some past sorrow, attracted her by sympathy towards him. She had long arguments with Eugenio about their favourites, and they generally ended by saying, "Well, we shall see in time who has made the better choice."

They little thought that in after life they would turn back their eyes, and attach a prophetic sense to these idle words.

CHAPTER VII.

RESTONI hated the Marchese. He had envied him bitterly from the first moment that he had seen him living in luxury at Florence. This feeling became more intense when he was brought in daily contact with the wealth he lusted after. But it was the scene after the Tombola which had given substance to these shadows, which had formed within his breast a resolution of revenge. However, he could bide his time; he was not of those serpents which hiss before they bite; he could use the humble smiles, the insinuating voice, the servile demeanour of dependency, and hold down the black wrath which struggled savagely within. He could not afford to injure Lorini, who was his purse—at least, just then. "But let me be independent," he would cry, grinding his teeth; "and then, Signor Marchese, we shall see!"

He sometimes expressed this sentiment in public,

under the influence of *rhum*, to which he was addicted. One evening, as he was playing *tresette* at the Caffè d'Italia, he felt a hand touch him on the shoulder. He looked round; a man in a cloak beckoned him out. He followed this person into a fiacre, which set them down at a house near to the Barbano. He was taken into a small saloon. A lady, whom he rocognised as the Signora Pinsuti, came in, followed by a French soubrette. Then ensued a brief but interesting conversation. Restoni was surprised to find that these ladies knew all about his private affairs: not being always conscious of what he said when he had taken too much, he was a little alarmed when he discovered that they were also acquainted with his secret feelings towards the Marchese dei Lorini. However, he was soon reassured: he was given money and instructions. The next day Maddalena missed some jewellery; it was discovered in the trunk of her femme de chambre, who was dismissed, protesting her innocence; and Julie obtained the situation.

According to the programme, they had at first set to work to separate the lovers. In this they had succeeded, and the Baroness, who had also arrived

in London, had been made acquainted with the fact.

The next step was more difficult. It was to create a misunderstanding between the lovers, and separate them altogether. This required caution and patience; nor was Restoni so anxious to bring it about, till his daughter, by a successful débût, should have made their pecuniary prospects sure. In the meantime, fortune favoured him with a powerful rival. This was Maynard Jenoure. He and Lorini had become great friends; their minds were congenial; they worshipped at the same shrine, for Art is One. Each admired the offerings which the other brought; and there could be no jealousy between them, for each gathered his materials in a different world. And each supplied the other with ideas, for relations exist between melody and colour, which we can neither explain nor deny. There are persons who, when they listen to a voice, distinctly see a colour corresponding to that voice. Thus they fed each other's minds, as air feeds the earth, and earth the air. Although Lorini built little visibly with his ideas, he loved to have them floating in his mind, and to raise with them palaces of lovely thought. This is, indeed,

the most delightful stage of creative work. It is not the conception which is so difficult to those who have the gift—which is less rare than is generally believed. It is its expression, with its processes of toilsome thought and of weary manual work, from which idle and irresolute minds shrink back in dismay, Want may have killed a genius or two, but ease has stifled them by scores. How many there are who, like Lorini, write poems only in imagination, and die in fine linen, unknown to fame.

Jenoure was a thoroughly selfish man; but he loved art, and he wished to see Lorini cultivate those flowers which now grew wild in him. He also wished to have a companion in society. But Lorini would not work; he wrote trifles for Maddalena, that was all. Once or twice he had attempted to begin his opera; but he could not sufficiently concentrate his mind; love demands idleness, though it despises luxury. Nor could he be decoyed into the world. He walked past its gay portals, and glanced carelessly at the crowd which politely struggled within. Sometimes, after leaving Maddalena late at night, he would join a little coterie of men, which Jenoure had carefully selected from the East and West—journalists, musi-

cians, painters, and a few professional men, from the first; and from the latter, some rising politicians and clever men about town. They met twice a week at his studio, and represented the young brains of England. But Lorini had not been accustomed to such a high mental temperature; besides, his ignorance of the language prevented him from joining in a general conversation; and what is there more tantalising than to sit in the midst of laughter which one does not understand. They were often polite enough to talk French, but then their conversation was almost always of Paris, which he did not know.

Or sometimes he would be attacked by a man who had been to Florence, who would talk to him about the galleries, and the studios, where he had seldom been; or about Dante and other ancient poets, whom he had never read. Lorini's literature had been music, society, and love; he was very glad to escape from such men to Maddalena.

Jenoure did not sympathise with Lorini's attachment at all: he could see nothing in Maddalena except her voice: and he affected to scorn singers, declaring that the gymnastics of the throat were little

better than those of the feet. He considered Lorini capable of marrying her, and, actuated by that meddlesome selfish sympathy which men call friendship, he determined to prevent it if he could. With the penetration of a great artist, he had read Restoni at first sight; he had some conversation with him to perfect his study of the character; saw that he would only be too happy to dispose of his daughter, as he would of her voice, to any one who would offer her a good engagement, and determined to throw a buyer in his way. As soon as the tickets for the concert were issued, he enclosed one with a note to Richard Atkins, Esquire, Bedford Square.

Richard Atkins had risen from a high stool in Mincing Lane, to be one of the richest men on the Royal Exchange.

It does not prove that a man has genius because he has made a fortune in the City. That commerce has had its Napoleons, I allow. There have been men able to penetrate the hidden policies of states, to divine the undeveloped resources of a continent, to organize a secret service, to foresee the fluctuations of all the markets of the world, to shake thrones with a word, and to make the Funds fall with a frown.

There have been men able to write a book on business, which they might entitle *The Merchant;* and which would be as wise and as moral as Machiavelli's *Prince.* There have been on 'Change ambitious despots, who have desired to conquer the moneyed universe, and who, after a brief and dazzling career, have been forced to end their days, like Napoleon, in foreign exile. Wealth is the fame of such men as these: some have earned it like Hannibal, but more like Fabius Cunctatus. To this last order, Richard Atkins undoubtedly belonged.

He had begun life with one idea in his brain, and had gradually worked it into a reality. With ant-like industry and patience, punctual as a chronometer, risking little, but letting no opportunity slip by, prizing the peace of life, and carefully watching the lesser wheels of business, he had plodded slowly but successfully on and on. He had been favoured with his windfalls, like most hard-working men. By unceasing persistence, one not only conquers certainties, one appears to gain some influence over chance. Those who wait all their lives for accidents to drop into their lap may be heard to complain that they always fall to those who

need them least, that is to say, who deserve them most.

A certain smallness of mind is essential to this kind of success. One must dwarf oneself to run in a narrow groove without ever slipping over the sides. Atkins had passed through youth without thinking of anything but business. It was not till he had become a principal that he had entered any kind of society. He did so then with a view to increasing his connection, for acquaintances may be metamorphosed into clients, and good strokes of business have sometimes been done at dessert.

In course of time he got into a regular dining set. He became well known at the London Tavern, the Albion, the Freemasons', St. James's Hall, the Star and Garter at Richmond, and the Ship at Greenwich. He called the waiters by their Christian names. He esteemed himself a judge of turtle and old port. Still this could scarcely be called extravagance; or it was one in which almost all men of business indulged. They conversed at the table as they might have done on 'Change. He seldom dined without acquiring some useful information. Ignorant of almost all the other topics of life, he had, however, studied

politics, which are closely linked with commerce. His principles were radical; he took in the *Dog Star*, a journal as malignant, though not as luminous, as the planet whose name it bears. Having studied this charming periodical for some years, he at length spoke. Previously, he had been noted only as a good listener; now he claimed to be an oracle. He spouted enormously on universal suffrage, abolition of church-rates, and the law of primogeniture. He climbed from the Gresham into the Reform. He became ambitious. He thought he could serve his country, which, according to a certain class of minds, is always on the brink of ruin. Parliament was about to be dissolved. Atkins determined to become a candidate.

He now began to spend money in an exaggerated, awkward kind of way. It was a new experience for him; he had hitherto learnt only how to make it. He rented a house in Bedford Square, furnished it incongruously, ordered so many square feet of pictures and yards of books, gave mammoth dinners to future constituents and to the members of the Liberal press.

He had thought of standing for one of the metropolitan boroughs, but, as these would be sure to

return Liberals already known, he was urged to unseat a Conservative from some country stronghold. Such an opportunity presented itself. A little county town, which had returned a Tory for generations past, was dissatisfied with its present member, and wished Mr. Atkins to represent it. Atkins went down, bought up all the taverns, drenched the town with beer, deafened the inhabitants with brass bands, covered houses with placards, published his address in all newspapers, and wrote a pamphlet (or bought one), which was to be had of all booksellers. Every day from the bow-window of the White Hart he harangued a crowd, and proved that he was not an orator. But this was of little consequence: his agents spoke for him, and from their mouths, like that of the lady in the fairy tale, dropped pearls and diamonds, or, what was better, sovereigns and Bank-of-England notes. He came in with ease, his opponent nowhere; but in the middle of his speech on the hustings, his mouth was filled with a Conservative rotten egg, and his eye blackened by a Tory potato. His election bill was enormous; but he was ejected on petition, and his former opponent was returned *nem. con.* He had the satisfaction of hear-

ing afterwards that the contested election had been cooked for the benefit of the free and enlightened electors; that he was the victim of a practical joke, which had cost him some thousand pounds. This sad accident gave him a distaste for politics, but the noisy and troubled life which he had led for a few months had revolutionised his mind. He had sipped excitement, and he longed to drink. He had been sucked into the world's whirlpool, and he continued to revolve there. At the modest age of forty-two, he learnt for the first time what is called life, and passed through the ordeal of a boy.

Now is it not a strange thing that Atkins, who on 'Change was regarded as a subtle and penetrating man; who in his office could read men's hearts in their faces, and could almost sniff a bankruptcy in the air; who mistrusted and examined everything; whose first idea was a suspicion, whose second was a test, should yet have earned at the West End the nickname of the Golden Calf? But such cases are common enough. He was one of those men who are shrewd, not by nature but by routine; he had learnt a special kind of craft which served him only in his business; so when his day's work was done he washed

his hands, changed his coat, left his brains behind him in the office, and issued forth into the world a fool.

We will not describe his adventures in the *troisième monde*,—so severe a stage of torment in that Purgatorio of London life through which young men must pass before they can reach the Paradiso of satiety. He came through it very lightly. Like those who have escaped the measles in their childhood, the attack was trifling when it seized him at middle age. One reason was, that he found himself, to a certain degree, in his own element; this life was so purely commercial, its proceedings of so bare and business-like a character, that very frequently he might have mistaken a boudoir for an office. The second reason was, that he soon became engrossed by the beauties of another world, a grade higher in the scale, of which the attractions were more alluring, the snares more skilfully concealed.

There are few young men who have not been bitten at some time or other with a mania for the stage. The eye is dazzled by gorgeous dresses, by painted scenery, and by a species of beauty which, owing to carmine, white paint, charcoal, and lime-light, is quite distinct from the beauty of real life,

and, if one does not sit too near, on that account perhaps fascinates the more. The ear is charmed with music and melodious words. The mind is intoxicated by the factitious events and emotions of the stage, and by the contagious enthusiasm of a crowded house. Mr. Atkins became stage-struck; and all his friends agreed in saying that it was a very bad case indeed.

At that time a certain D. S. Jones was manager of one of the great London theatres. It was then devoted to the legitimate drama, from motives of high art, by its spirited proprietor, who was also the director of a restaurant with private rooms—a kind of debased *Maison Dorée;* and of some tawdry tea-gardens, dissolute but not amusing—Mabille without the *can-can.* This worthy man, desirous no doubt of restoring that liberal intercourse between the artists and the intellectual public which prevailed in the days of the great Elizabethan drama (when the town gallants paid a shilling to sit upon the stage), gave stall subscribers an *entrée* behind the scenes. Thus Atkins entered the dramatic world; and as wealth is the best passport to the esteem of players, who care as little for wit, which they are always pur-

veying, as the proverbial chandler for his tallow, he was soon on the best terms with these gentlemen, supped with them on kidneys and gin-and-water, and was elected at a night club called the Craven. After a certain period of probation he became acquainted with the goddesses of the green-room, and then his sufferings began. There are good and bad women on the stage, as in every other walk of life. Putting aside the real artists (how rare they are!), the genuine actress belongs to one of two classes. Either she is a married woman absurdly domestic, going to the theatre as a clerk goes to the City, regarding her art as a plain trade, darning stockings in her dressing-room between the acts, and sometimes exhibiting a large baby in the green-room,—in fact, a perfect middle-class British female. Or she is single, and is desirous of marrying above her station. She looks upon her profession more as a means than as an end. She takes sufficient interest in it to be jealous of another's success, and that is all. Experience has made her impregnable, for her life has been one long duel with men.

Besides these excellent matrons and virtuous intrigantes, there is a class of branded characters who

buy their way upon the boards. This is the monster abuse of the stage, and one for which these bribed managers are alone responsible. It is owing to this that a popular prejudice has been conceived against a body of hard-working and for the most part respectable women. These stragglers from the *demi-monde* are supposed to represent a class to which they do not properly belong.

As may well be supposed, Mr. Atkins became entangled, and it must have been edifying to the younger members of the company to watch this grave, austere, thoroughly respectable-looking man emulating the wantonness of youth. He presented a monstrous caricature of the English character, which is starched and deliberate even in its vices, which sits in the casino as if it were at church, and discusses the weather at the climax of an orgie.

Nothing is more pitiable and less pitied than the condition of a middle-aged dupe. He met with no mercy (the boys do not meet with much), and suffered a series of sad experiences which left their marks upon his vanity and his purse. His conscience upbraided him severely for his folly, and

he was forced to listen to another voice, which was neither small nor still.

There lived with him a maiden sister, who was formed in the same mould as himself, but of harder and more durable materials. If she had changed at all on entering the fatal portal of the Uncertain Age, it was to become more austere, more malevolent, and more devout; while a slight gruffness in her voice, and a delicate fringe on the upper lip, announced that she had undergone a kind of metamorphosis; as one sometimes flushes an elderly hen pheasant endowed with the spurs and half the plumage of the male.

In former days she had been useful to him, nay, almost indispensable. She had nursed him through several illnesses which he had had. She had a small annuity of her own; thus she cost him nothing for her own expenses, and she saved him from the petty knaveries of lodging-house keepers, maid-servants, and tradesmen. She possessed the genius of shopping. She knew how to buy everything at the cheapest place, at the cheapest time, and in the cheapest manner. Nothing could deceive her palate, her forefinger, or her eye. Atkins might have been a great man on 'Change, but in the market his sister

was sublime. She was parsimonious, but she was not a miser, because she was not a misanthrope: she was only a domestic economist. She was not without that vanity which in energetic characters is the seed of ambition. She and her brother had been reared in the faith of the Primitive Methodists, and it was her fond desire to be a personage among the pious circle in which she moved. She cherished in her heart the idea of giving little parties to which she might invite that popular preacher whose brazen voice had once rung through London like the last trump; and that learned divine who had so clearly proved from passages in the Jewish Prophets that the world will end in the year 1867; and that celebrated missionary from the Sandwich Islands who had kept there a church and a store; whose days were passed in arithmetic and prayer; and who, by investing his money in the Glasgow Bank, thus obeyed to the letter the divine command (Luke xii. 33); or, best of all, a mulatto from the West Indies or New York, who, having inherited some brains from a white father, had been palmed off upon Exeter Hall as a full-blooded negro, and as an ordinary type of that intelligent and elevated race.

She had not therefore opposed her brother's political aspirations. She hoped that he would be an instrument in the Lord's hands for the abolition of Church-rates, and for the repeal of the Catholic Emancipation Act, and that so they might become great people in their tribe.

But it was during a visit of hers to the pious city of Aberdeen that her brother committed his first act of independent extravagance. He took advantage of her absence to rent and furnish the house in Bedford Square, and awaited her return with some little trepidation, having warned her by letter to expect a surprise. She came home anticipating evil; but when she beheld the gorgeousness of the new abode —when she saw of what glorious shopping she had been despoiled—when she estimated by an effort of mental addition the fearful expense which had been incurred—when she reflected that her brother had dared to take such a step without consulting her,—she sank down upon an ottoman (for the first time in her life) and shed a torrent of acrid tears.

Then she obliged him to go with her over the house, and made a vocal inventory of all the furniture, each entry a sarcasm. Everything was bran-

new; and, though nothing matched, everything had come from the same shop in the Tottenham Court Road. As for the pictures, she could not judge of their quality, nor (luckily for him) of their cost. But she had ever taken the Mohammedan view of art; and although one of the subjects was Scriptural (it was Joseph and Potiphar's wife), she reviled them all in the bitterest terms. When she looked over the library, she found that it was almost filled with profane works; and when her eyes, somewhat mollified, had wandered over the shelves devoted to theology, they flashed into new wrath on discovering a life of Wesley between Colenso's *Pentateuch* and the *Essays and Reviews*. She might have forgiven, though she could never have forgotten, this first act of insubordination, had her brother been disposed to place his domestic affairs in her hands, and to come to her for his omnibus and luncheon money, as he had been formerly wont to do. But now commenced that unhappy mode of life which has already been described. He spent away from home those evenings which had once been consecrated to the Bible and the ledger; he used a latch-key: sometimes he did not come home at all; he gave up going to

chapel; he converted his house into a live museum, collecting therein once a week specimens of the arts and sciences who made use of his dwelling as a kind of club, found fault with his champagne, which they drank plentifully, and derided him behind his back.

All this was bad enough; but when she learnt that he frequented play-houses, and was spending his substance upon actresses, her grief was mingled with a holy wrath: he was threatened with bankruptcy in this world, and eternal damnation in the next; and prayers were offered up for him in chapel—a mode of religious sarcasm much resorted to among Dissenters. But when she found that the more she abused him the more prodigal he became, she changed her tactics, assumed the part of the meek and suffering Christian, contrived that he should overhear her praying for him, had a cold supper laid out for him every night before she went to bed, and so cleverly insinuated herself into his confidence, that on a certain night (and it is here that my story takes up its thread), having just lost an illusion, and feeling a need of sympathy, he confided to her his last sin, and the punishment which had overtaken him.

She commented temperately and almost kindly upon the revelations which he had made. Human nature is indulgent to those sins which are confessed; besides, she wished to hear more of these confidences; they gave her glimpses of a world which was unknown to her, and of that side of her brother's character which was as great a puzzle to her as the other side of the moon to astronomers. "Can you not return to the right path?" she said. "What good and useful evenings we used to spend. Let us begin them again, Richard."

"I have tried again and again, Jane. It's no use. I am quite unsettled. I see my folly, but I can't cure myself of it."

"Surely you will never believe in any of these women again? What do they care for you, except for your money? You are not young, you are not handsome: you are a plain man of business; how could you be so vain as to think that you could please them for yourself?"

Atkins fidgeted about: these remarks were more truthful than pleasing.

His sister ran to him, anxiously. "Do you feel it?" she cried. "Is it coming?"

"Coming! no, damnation! what do you mean? Coming? no. Can't I move my legs without your putting yourself into such an infernal state of mind?"

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! What dreadful language. I am sure I beg your pardon, brother; but you have had so many attacks lately that I naturally felt nervous."

"Nervous!" muttered Atkins, in a tone of scorn.

"And you know what the doctor said, Richard, that if you did not lead a very quiet life he would not answer for the consequences."

"I don't want him to answer for the consequences," retorted Atkins, who did not appear to relish the turn which the conversation had taken. Then he said, "I know what I shall do. The Vachell Court lease will be out in a month. I shan't renew it. I shall retire, and marry, and take it myself."

"Retire? what!—already?"

"Yes; I have made plenty of money."

"But why do you wish to marry?"

"I want to settle down, and that is the only way I see of doing it."

"Had you not better speak to the doctor first?"

"No."

"Do you think that you ought to marry in your present state of health? You know how precarious your life is. Supposing anything were to happen to you?"

"Then my wife would come in for a large fortune," said Atkins, drily. His sister burst into tears. The butler entered with a letter on a tray. As Atkins opened it, a red ticket fell out.

"The play-house again!" groaned Jane.

"No, it's a concert ticket, as it happens," said he.

Her face brightened up a little; for in England, people who think it wrong to hear Patti and Mario at Covent Garden, listen to them without scruple at St. James's Hall.

The contents of the letter (which he did not communicate to his sister) were as follows:—

"My dear Atkins,—I have just returned to London, and have the pleasure of sending you a ticket for the concert on Monday night. Restoni, who has been making such a noise abroad, is going to sing. I know that *you* would not like to miss such an event.

"Yours truly,

"M. JENOURE."

This act of politeness from one who had always treated him with undisguised contempt astonished and delighted Atkins. The Monday night found him in a stall, his neck enveloped in a white cravat, and a pair of large white gloves wrinkled on his hands. When he read in the bills that this was a benefit night, he was yet more surprised. Jenoure must therefore have bought the ticket which he had sent to him. Why was this? Perhaps Restoni was a friend of Jenoure's, and he had sent round tickets to his friends to secure their hands. "Well, he shall have mine," thought Atkins, who was a good-natured man enough, and he applauded heartily when Maddalena appeared before the lights.

She sang *Batti, batti,* and was vehemently encored. Then, to display the marvellous compass and flexibility of her voice, she sang the *Gli angui d'inferno* from the "Zauberflöte." The uproar increased. She sang the "Last Rose of Summer"—version of Moore, not Flotow. It was with difficulty that the audience would be appeased. They would have made her sing all night. The conductor suggested that she had better sing "God save the Queen." The national anthem is a quietus

to musical enthusiasm, especially when one has heard it some thousand times, as all Englishmen have. However, at length they allowed the performance to proceed. Atkins, though knowing little of music, was not quite insensible to the charms of a fine voice: he had also been much struck with the appearance of Maddalena, whose face lighted up in an extraordinary manner when she sang.

Jenoure tapped him on the shoulder. "Come round to the Craven presently," he said, "and I will introduce you to the father."

Atkins positively gasped. He was to make the acquaintance of a prima donna's father; perhaps, some day, of the prima donna herself—he who had never risen above a "walking lady." He hastened to the Craven, which was very full, as usual on Saturday nights after 11 p.m. In one corner of the room sat a group of bearded men discussing the prospects of the approaching R. A. Exhibition, and exchanging anecdotes of the studio and dealer's shop. Another group, with shaved faces, were criticising the cast of the Easter pieces, and cursing their respective managers. Several others had paired off into corners. There you might see A——, the ventrilo-

quist, talking with B——, the writer of entertainments; C——, the editor of a new comic paper, with D——, a professional punster; E——, a successful actor, who was about to take a theatre, had been button-holed by F——, a writer of unplayed comedies. Alone, with a red face and a grey pointed beard, a Mazzini hat upon his knees, and a glass of gin-and-water in his hand, immersed in the meditative state of drunkenness, sat G——, writer of epic poems for posterity, and of prospectuses for tradesmen. His next neighbour was H——, a geologist, who unhappily believed himself to be a wit; and, opposite to him K——, a respectable land agent, who had an extraordinary mania for personating the lower animals. When requested, he would buzz like a bee, crack a nut like a baboon, snort like a hippopotamus, crow like a cock, trumpet like an elephant, talk like a parrot, bray like an ass, miaoul like a cat, and hop about the room, his hands hanging before him, like a kangaroo. He went to the Craven to indulge in these vagaries, as the man of science went there to excrete his wit, as the journalists went there to pick up ideas, as the actors went there to propitiate the critics,

as the playwrights went there to make interest with the actors, as the lawyers and doctors went there to get clients, as the talkers went there to shine, and the listeners to say they had been shone upon. The Craven had been founded as a caravanserai for the few Bohemians who have not yet succumbed to death or to marriage; but as these gentlemen seldom attended and never paid, its doors were enlarged, and a number of middle-aged men from the Temple and the City, and of boys from the Army and the War-office, were allowed to cross its sacred threshold. The club became genteel and dull; it moved into a respectable neighbourhood, where, in spite of its degeneration, it speedily became a nuisance; several absurd regulations were then made; K—— was forbidden to howl after midnight; a whist-table was smuggled in, and seated round it four solemn faces cast a gloom upon the spirits of the company. In addition to this they laid down a carpet; they forbade smoking at the dinner-table; and, worst of all, they built a lavatory—the grave of Bohemianism. The Craven therefore had neither the delicious freedom of a cider-cellar nor the luxuries of a genuine club. As for the company, it was much the same.

Putting aside its numerous nobodies, who were regarded only as animated subscriptions, its set consisted for the most part of second-rate men—second-rate authors, second-rate artists, second-rate actors, and one second-rate African traveller. They were good-natured fellows enough, and were always ready to assist a brother artist in distress, but they would play at a kind of amateur theatricals among themselves. Not content to converse like ordinary mortals, they would insist on sitting down together at a table with the deliberate intention of being funny, and would spend hours in straining for bon-mots, which did not come—never opening their mouths to speak without a grin; perpetrating vile puns, and indulging in that sour, witless pleasantry which is almost peculiar to England, and which is called appropriately *chaff*. What a contrast between this noisy, insipid circle, and the artistic reunions of Paris! However, they had an amusing night by accident now and then.

Besides the characters already sketched, there was a party of whist-players in a distant corner of the room, and round the supper-table sat the musical critics and their friends, debating on the merits

of the débutante. Atkins took a seat among them.

"She is as beautiful as Giulia Grisi in her youth," said L——, to a silvery-bearded man in a skull-cap.

"I do not think her handsome," said M——, a young critic of great ability. "She is not bad-looking."

"She has the art of making herself at home with her audience, like Piccolomini," said N——, an over-dressed young man, who had just entered the Craven in the hope of getting into green-rooms.

"Piccolomini was only impudent," growled L——; "this girl has grace. And those who don't think her handsome must be difficult to please."

"She would seem handsome to any one whose eyes were failing him," replied M——, "but her features are irregular. However, she is good-looking enough for the stage; her eyes are fine, her figure is good, and her complexion paints well."

"There can be no two opinions about her voice, at all events," said N——.

"I beg your pardon," retorted L——, "there can

oe a hundred-and-two opinions about her voice. It is only half-educated, to begin with; her middle notes are indifferent, and she is not quite sure of her upper ones. Then, as for her style ——"

"Pooh! you are hypercritical. What fine contralto notes those were. She has a voice of three registers, *à la* Malibran."

"And she can prolong a note too. While she was on that F, you might have gone down-stairs, had an ice, and come up again."

"What a play of ornament in the last air. Could Catalani have beaten that, old gentleman?"

"The Italians all spoil their singing with their fioriture," replied L——.

"She rather reminds me of Pasta."

"More like Bosio."

"Nonsense: how can you compare her with any one but Jenny Lind?"

"It seems to me that she is like everybody's favourite," said M——. Then, turning to Atkins with a covert sneer, he said, "Whom do you think she resembles?"

"Whoever resembles her."

"Not new, but well applied. Restoni can even

inspire millionaires. L——, how is it that you have escaped?"

"I only say this. Her voice is a half-developed prodigy. But she has another great defect. There is no heart in her singing. She is very young, and has not yet arrived at the age of sentiment. When she has suffered a little, she will sing differently. To draw tears one must have shed them."

"Gentlemen," said M——, raising his glass, "I beg to propose the misery of Mademoiselle Restoni."

"A bumper to Restoni's misery, with musical honours—No, she has had them once to-night."

"May she be crossed in love."

"May she spoil her best bonnet."

"May her hopes be b-blighted."

"May Chuckleigh cut her up in the *Dog Star*."

"Or inveigle her into marriage."

"That would be too severe. Cradled by Chuck leigh into song."

"Compelled to share his gin and his garret."

"What a dram-attic fête!" said the punster, joining them.

"It's a great shame that nobody will marry Chuckleigh. Is it true that he proposed to the

corps-de-ballet all round, and that they nick-named him the Solicitor-General?"

"No," said M——; "but he did really propose to one of them, Fanny Lightfoot. I forget exactly what she said—something about his antecedents preventing her from entering into such close relations,—a very veteran joke."

"What!" said N——, "is that the Chuckleigh who——"

"Don't be explicit," said M——, "it is one of the faults of youth."

"And he belongs to this club!"

"Why not?" said M——. "He is outlawed from decent society, so we receive him here. It is not our business to inquire into his moral character: the Committee let him off that little business about the dishonoured bill, and otherwise his conduct has been most exemplary. He is sure to be here presently, and you will derive great benefit from his conversation. I forget whether he turned Catholic or Quaker last, but he is always very religious, and rebukes the ribaldry of infidels. He knows that his reputation is rank, and has the good taste to sprinkle it with artificial scent. So we put up with

him; he tells us the night telegrams, and reveals the communications which he has received from archangels over a round table—for he is a spiritualist, you must know. But here he is."

The door opened, and a young old man tottered jauntily into the room. On a warped, attenuated body was perched a large head, from which the hair fell down in long black wisps like greased snakes. His face, once handsome, had been ravaged by night-articles and low debauchery. His cheeks were flushed with gin, under the influence of which he had just composed a column; his eyes were half cowardly, half impudent, his mouth had been formed by habit into a vacant sneer. Mr. Northumberland Chuckleigh was the son of a distinguished man, but in his early days had made some "mistake," from which he had never been able to recover. The *Dog Star* had picked him off the streets, and in the office of that infamous journal his moral ruin had been completed. He was its man-of-all-work, doing political leaders, musical and dramatic criticisms, and the social topics,—with fires, and cricket-matches, if required. Long practice in writing on subjects of which he knew nothing had given him a knack of

embezzling ideas, which, handled by him, became so disfigured that their own authors would not have known them again. In addition to the public calumnies which he was compelled to forge, he was allowed to be venomous on his own account; shook hands with a man one day and slandered him in print the next, flattering himself that anonymous obscurity would always save him from being crushed. False religion and low radicalism were his two chief themes; that is to say, cant was his virtue and slander was his satire. But the abject slavery in which he was held rendered him an object worthy only of compassion and contempt. After all, he stang and stole to live; he was forced to cut his opinions according to the orders of his employers; he was not allowed to keep a conscience, nor to clean his mind; he was a harnessed reptile, an industrious flea.

Jenoure came in with Restoni and Eugenio. The former he introduced to Atkins, the latter to L——, who, though not a newspaper critic, was noted as a musical connoisseur.

Restoni, who had been told beforehand by Jenoure that he was going to introduce him to one of the richest men in London, greeted the stock-broker in

his politest manner. Atkins paid him some clumsy compliments on his daughter's singing. Restoni thanked him, and glided into general topics. He soon discovered Atkins's one faculty, and, possessing some knowledge of Italian commerce, with the art of improvising facts to suit other people's theories, he managed to say a good deal on the subjects of cotton-growth in the Levant, copper-mines in Tuscany, and the revival of Genoa as a trading city. Atkins said that he should like to talk over these matters with him at another time; Restoni seized his opportunity, and invited him to Albemarle Street. They supped together, and afterwards settled down to whisky-toddy and cigars.

In the meantime Lorini and the musical connoisseur had entered on a violent discussion. It was the old subject of melody and harmony. Lorini, like nearly all Italians, was ignorant of German music. In his studies he had never risen above Rossini. The old man assured him that many of this composer's so-called inventions had been hackneyed among the Germans before he had made use of them; and he ended the argument by saying, "Young man, if you wish to write operas, study

Mozart. He alone has mastered the art of musical construction, of mingling harmony and melody in just proportions, of balancing the beauties of the orchestra and the voice. Ah! you may smile; but if you have genius you will not sleep your first night after 'Don Giovanni.' It will be an apocalypse for you, mark my words."

Lorini was about to reply, when shouts of laughter called their attention to the other end of the room.

Restoni had never tasted whisky before. He found it so agreeable that he had taken several glasses of it with a meagre allowance of hot water, which Mr. Chuckleigh assured him destroyed the flavour of the spirit. He was now rather drunk, and was relating anecdotes of Italian life as gross, if not as witty, as those of the Decameron. Unacquainted with the *finesses* of the English language, he could only express his vulgar jokes in the coarsest terms; and this, with his accent and his idioms, appeared to amuse if it did not elevate his hearers. Observing Lorini's eyes fixed on him with an expression of disgust, he staggered across the room, and, placing his hands upon the Marchese's shrinking shoulders, exclaimed, in Italian:—

"Ha! ha! Signor Marchese, my daughter sang well to-night, eh! Her future is sure now. Thanks to you, amico mio, thanks to you."

Then his eyes fell upon the cards which were being imperturbably dealt forth upon the small green table.

"Ah, cards! cards!" cried he. "Well, I shall have money now to play—yes, and it will be my money—my money, Marchese—dost thou understand?"

To be *tutoyé* by Maddalena was a lingual caress for Lorini; to be *tutoyé* by her father was an insult. This is one of the paradoxes of philology. His lips turned white with wrath, and he rose to leave the room, followed by Jenoure and the reeling Restoni, and by twenty voices humming, "What did he say?"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE month of May came in, and London began to fill. Carriages and cabs laden with luggage drove up, at all hours of the day and night, to hotels and houses at the West-End. Once more there were blocks in Regent Street and Bond Street—grand arteries of fashion; once more, policemen were stationed at corners to protect aristocratic panels and restrain the ardour of butchers' carts; once more, Pall-Mall and St. James's Street were adorned by loungers; and bow-windows were crowded, and cigars were smoked on the broad stone steps of the palatial clubs, and a sunny afternoon sprinkled the Park with fashionable butterflies; and at night, carriages, formed in a long and silent line, drew attention to houses emitting music and blazing with light. The season had begun.

The English are less dull than usual at this period

of the year. Everybody has been somewhere, and has something to say. Esclandres from the continental Courts, Swiss scenery, Paris fashions, German Spas, Italian art, all constitute fuel for that devouring element — dinner conversation. Those who have not travelled, can talk of the books which came out in the winter, and of their adventures at country houses. Then there are the social and parliamentary prospects to discuss; new members in the House, and débutantes in the saloon; the Royal Academy, the Derby, and the Opera.

The opera in London is very different from that in Italy. Formerly it was almost the same; that is to say, it was a social institution. In those days, when Fop's Alley was in all its glory, one could obtain admission only by vouchers; the house visited and received; the gallery was reserved for servants; after the performance, balls were frequently held in the theatre; to go to the opera was almost equivalent to entering the beau monde.

But soon the opera-house was besieged by a wealthy middle-class, created by the increase of money, and by a mass of country people brought to London by the railroads once or twice a week. Now

the opera is a public performance, and nothing more; the crush-room is a vulgar chaos; people of rank sell their boxes instead of sending keys to their friends; amphitheatre stalls have been built to accommodate tradesmen and their families; and counter-jumpers cry, Brayvo! from the gallery. The opera in England therefore, has lost all its social prestige; but, thanks to the enterprise—one might almost say, the enthusiasm—of managers, it must be considered the best in the world during its brief but brilliant reign.

The English have been reproached with an indifference for music. But this is scarcely true. Since 17 there has never been a season without an Italian opera. The supporters of the opera in England are not only fond of music, but they patronize music of a high and classical kind. "Don Giovanni" is the chief favourite; Beethoven's "Fidelio" "draws;" Cherubini's "Medea" was lately revived with success. They have not, it is true, so fine an ear nor such technical knowledge as an Italian audience; and their ignorance of our language prevents them from appreciating the *opera bouffa*. They listen more with the heart than with the head; sometimes they will begin to applaud quite timidly, from fear of interrupting the

singer; but the phrase which they have, "to bring down the house," proves that their plaudits may be of the most enthusiastic kind. The grand difference between the English and the Italians is this: that the audience at Her Majesty's and Covent Garden consists entirely of educated persons, while San Carlo and La Scala are filled with the populace. The English learn to appreciate good music; in Italy they love it from their cradles; with the one people it is acquisition, with the other it is instinct. In England the populace do not understand, and do not care for, the higher branches of the art. Selections from operas are given at the music-halls, are listened to patiently, but coldly received. The gondolier sings, as he goes through the streets, an air from "Lucia di Lammermoor;" the English costermonger whistles a nigger-melody.

The London stage is favourable for a young singer: the audience are patient and good-natured, and slow to condemn; if they do not recognize the finer touches of the art, those slight blunders which the anxiety and inexperience of the débutante so often cause, will also escape them. Moreover, there are no intrigues to contend with; there is no *loge*

infernal to be propitiated; no *chef de claque* to be bribed, as at Paris; nor, as in Italy, can a singer be ruined by a *jeu d'esprit* from the parterre.

Maddalena made her debût in "Il Trovatore." She had not been loudly heralded; the greater part of the audience had never heard her name before the night on which she appeared. Not a season passes at London without the appearance of singers who make a second-rate success, and are heard of no more. The audience, having expected little, were surprised as well as pleased with Maddalena. She made a grand success; and at midnight half London knew it. It was carried into balls, and so circulated among fashionable thousands. It was carried into club smoking-rooms, and into every kind of hotel and tavern, from the Clarendon, in Bond Street, to the Albion, in Drury Lane. Next morning, the journals spread the news far and wide among the outer world.

She sang in other operas, and always with the same success. The critics, who had been cautious at first, were now assured that she was not a one-part singer, and began to compare her with Jenny Lind. Sonnets were written in her honour; racers and colours were called after her; her photograph appeared in every

window; waltzes and ballads were dedicated to her; the celebrated Madame Deborah requested permission to enamel her, or, at all events, to gold-dust her hair; English peers and City merchants, Russian princes and American commercial travellers, wrote her offers of carriages and pin-money, diamonds and dollars, their houses, their hearts—everything, in short, but their hands. She made up these epistles into squills, and Lorini lighted his cigars with them.

But though Maddalena's public life was so brilliant, she was less happy than she had ever been before. Restoni now felt himself to be independent. He wished for nothing better than to quarrel with the man who had made him so. On the other hand, since his behaviour at the Craven, Lorini's repugnance against him had increased to utter aversion. Often, when he came into the room, Eugenio went out of it. Restoni, observing this, contrived to be very often at home. He made himself, what is called in Italian, *il terzo incomodo.* He now threw off his skin of servility, and assumed towards the Marchese that cold and contemptuous manner with which he formerly himself had been treated. Not a day passed but they exchanged angry looks, and some-

times angry words. Maddalena would often hasten from them to shed tears in her own room. What is more trying than for a girl to see those whom she most loves and honours in the world, perpetually bickering with each other, and lowering themselves before her eyes?

Lorini was also subjected to another annoyance. Atkins and Restoni had become intimate, and it was clear that the former was an admirer of Maddalena, and that he was encouraged by her father. He came to Albemarle Street every day after City hours, frequently dined with them, and even returned to supper with them after the theatre. The conversation was always in English, which Lorini did not understand, and in which Restoni forced his daughter always to take a part. This enraged our hero. He upbraided Maddalena for being polite to this man, and obedient to her father; accused her of coldness and coquetry; and often retaliated by dining and supping with Jenoure and his set. He did not care to be with Maddalena except when she was quite alone. He had been accustomed now for some time to have her openly, wholly, and unrestrainedly to himself, and he was indifferent to those trifles which form the chief

charm of a dawning love—an askant look, a whisper in a waltz, a hasty stolen *tête-à-tête*. Maddalena was happy enough if he was with her in the room; if she could see his face, and sometimes hear his voice.

She did not understand why he should be so ill-tempered, reproached him gently, and received peevish words in reply. A coolness rose between them, but still Eugenio came every day, and Restoni, impelled by bribes of the Baroness, and by a mercantile desire to substitute Atkins for Lorini, determined to bring matters to a crisis.

One evening, Eugenio and Maddalena were together. Restoni was out. It was a Wednesday night. There was no Opera. At six o'clock, Eugenio rose, and held out his hand.

"Art thou going?"

"Yes," said he; "I am going to dine."

"To dine? but I have ordered dinner for thee here."

"That is unfortunate, for I have engaged to meet some friends."

"Where?"

"At Verrey's."

"Write a note to say that thou canst not go."

"Impossible. I have made an engagement."

"Oh, very well."

"I would if I could——"

"As you cannot, it is useless to talk about it. When will you come to-morrow?"

"Why do you wish me to stay?"

"I do not wish you to stay——"

"Oh, I beg your pardon" (*haughtily*).

"If thou wouldst rather go elsewhere."

"It is not a matter of choice. I have made an engagement, and it would be dishonourable to break it."

"Certainly. I should not have invited you, had I known that such was the case. But I do not like dining all alone (*carelessly*), and so——"

"All alone? but your father will be in presently."

"No; he dines in town to-day."

"Well, then, thy inamorato—that man—what is his horrible name?—he is sure to come."

"What is he to us?"

"To me he is *il terzo incomodo;* to you he is agreeable company, no doubt."

"Eugenio, thou art unkind."

"Not at all; but you have so often told me that filial duty compels you to be polite to your father's friend, and I do not care to listen to people talking in a language which I do not understand."

"Yes; it is very tiresome," said Maddalena, in the coaxing voice which a mother uses to a spoiled child; "but he shall not be annoyed to-day. Mr. Atkins has been here."

"Yes?"

"And the servant thought that I was out," she said, with an arch look.

"Oh," said Eugenio, laughing, but reseating himself, "thou hast actually made a sacrifice for me."

"Ah, that is right; say *tu*." She folded her arms round his neck. "Eugenio, sometimes I think that thou dost not care for me."

"Not care for thee, my angel! What do I care for, then? Is not my life yours?"

"Then why dost thou leave me so often alone?"

"Alone? Never."

"Eugenio, when I am not with thee I am alone."

"That man irritates me, and thy father——"

She placed her hand on his mouth.

"Hush, dearest. We shall not be here long. We

shall soon return to Italy, shall we not? Then we shall see that odious Englishman no more."

"I think that he is in love with thee, Maddalena."

"Oh, he sits and looks at me with his horrible eyes, and he talks to me so stupidly. But he is my father's friend. A little patience, dear Eugenio. Bear with me yet a little while."

"Yes, dearest, I will bear with thee till we go back to our own land. We will seek some sweet and lonely spot where we can live in peace together. We shall be the more happy for this interlude of trouble and vexation. I will write my opera. It shall be for thee, my beloved; and as I write it thou shalt bend over me and sing."

In such words as these, which in English is the exaggerated language of romance, but which in Italy is that of love, they communed long together. After they had dined they sat by the open window, and looked out upon the night. The sky was black, and the moon was "greasy," and the stars were dim; yet the air was warm, and they heard music in the distance. It seemed to them a night like those of old. They sat embraced closely in each other's arms. Their hair intermingled, their

lips ached with kissing, and their eyes with being bent in such long and loving looks.

They heard a knock at the door, looked down, and saw it was Restoni. One long hot kiss, which they remembered all their lives, and they flew apart.

Restoni came in, pretended not to observe Eugenio, who had seated himself in a corner of the room, and going immediately to Maddalena, took both her hands in his.

"My daughter," he said, "I have just received a splendid offer for thee."

"What is that, my father?"

"I have met a good Frenchman. He was speaking of thee. I told him that I was thy father, and he immediately embraced me. Then he made me a proposal, the most generous that I have ever heard. He will engage thee for five years, at the enormous price of five thousand pounds. Thou must stipulate to sing where and as often as he chooses; but he is a good man, and will not demand more than is fairly his due. 5000*l.*!—250,000 francs!!! It is enormous."

"My father," replied Maddalena, calmly, "in a

matter of this kind, should we not allow ourselves to be guided by our benefactor?"

"I shall be happy to hear anything which the Marchese dei Lorini may wish to say."

Lorini was almost suffocated with rage.

"What," he cried, "you wish to sell your daughter into slavery! This is too much. I have endured a great deal; but, by God, this is too much."

"I am at a loss to understand what the Signor Marchese means," replied Restoni, with insulting coolness. "We are discussing my daughter's affairs. I recognise no will but hers, and no authority but my own."

Then ensued an altercation which it would be painful to transcribe. Restoni, who was really a very clever man, was collected, dignified, severe. Lorini launched at him torrents of abuse, accused him of ingratitude, drunkenness, and dishonesty. He was very young; ill feelings had been rankling for some time in his heart; all that he had said was true, but it was said in a very intemperate and injudicious manner. Maddalena, who did not understand on what grounds he had accused her father of theft, and who had heard nothing of the scene at

the Craven, was horrified. She did not say a word. Restoni ordered him imperiously to leave the house. Lorini, with clenched fists, pale cheeks, and flaming eyes, rushed down the stairs. There was a pause. Then Restoni turned to Maddalena, and drew her upon his breast. He infused into his voice those tender and pathetic tones, which he could use like an actor upon the stage. "Dearest daughter," he murmured, "thou knowest that I love thee. I believed that this unhappy offer would have pleased thee. I brought it to thee with my heart full of joy. Well, I have been mistaken; I am an ignorant man, but that is not my fault. Could he not have told me so in more gentle words? Because a cunning speculator has deceived me, should I (while yet no harm is done) be called a thief! a drunkard! —oh, God! the words seem to sear my lips!"

He sank on a sofa and buried his face with his hands (watching her attentively through his fingers). His grief, his shame, were too deep for utterance. A slight sob only shuddered through his frame. She knelt down by him; she tried to console him; he was inconsolable; and finally (this was high art, indeed) he fainted away.

She sat by his bed-side till day-break, clasping his fevered hand (it was her hand which was burning, poor thing), and sometimes kissing him. Feeling by this time very sleepy, he affectionately insisted upon her taking some repose, but before she left him he said: "Maddalena, promise me two things. First, let us never speak of this theatrical speculator again." (This was, perhaps, as well, for he had never existed.) When she had promised, he hesitated a little, as if from timidity, and then he whispered—

"Maddalena, dearest, do not be angry with me; but for the next day or two only, till I am quite well, do not let *him* come here; at least do not let me see him."

"My father," said Maddalena, "whatever it may cost me, I will not see him till he has tried to wipe those words away."

"He! he! he!" laughed Restoni, as he turned round to go to sleep. "He did right to call me a thief. I have stolen Maddalena from him."

In the meantime Lorini had spent a very bad night. When he recalled the words which he had used on such slight apparent provocation, his face

burned. He felt that he had made a mistake; he had degraded himself in his own and in Maddalena's eyes. He would beg her pardon humbly, and he would promise to behave more kindly to her father for the future. But when he called the next day, he was informed that the signorina was ill. He asked for Restoni, and, had he seen him then, would probably have made a frank apology. But Restoni sent down word that he could see no one. Lorini was staggered. He began to have forebodings. Was this illness a trick? No. A

ificate had been sent to the theatre,

era for the night was changed. He

ton, and they went together into the

ry Street.

l me, tell me, dear doctor," he said,

ands, "what is it?"

na is very ill."

rite to her. You must see her again

r doctor, and take a letter from me."

to a side table, and opened a port-

n stayed his hand. "Listen," he said;

will do nothing without her father's

consent. It is this struggle between love and duty which has brought on her hysteria."

"What am I to do then?" said Lorini. "Advise me what to do."

"First, you must let me examine you."

"I consent."

"Do you love her?"

"How can you ask me such a question?"

"Yes, I know that you are fond of her. But there are so many different kinds of love."

"And mine is pure, sir. I have been a man of pleasure, but I can swear that since I have known her not a word, not a——"

"Yes, yes, dear Lorini, but that is not what I mean. Do you wish to marry her?"

Lorini stared at him. He was paralysed by this question. It will be remembered that once or twice, yielding to vague impulses, he had let fall words which had nourished hopes in Maddalena's heart. When he had played the part of Carlo he was aware that this was the case, and had felt compunctions for having done so. But of late months he had not even thought of such a thing. It is often thus. When a man loves a woman

with warmth, but without vulgar passion, and is able to see her as often as he pleases, he will go on contentedly till a rival appears, or till obstacles threaten to separate him from her. But with women it is different: marriage is their destiny, and is always before their eyes.

"Do you not see," said Darlington, "that you are doing a great wrong to this girl whom you say you love? You will continue this Platonic union till you get tired of her. If she is fortunate, it will be only a few years; or, may be, you will remain true to her till her youth is past. Well, what then? No laws link your names, no children your hearts, together. You will return to society and marry a person of your own rank. And she—she will not make you more than one reproach when the hour of parting comes; but that will be sufficient, if you have a heart, to embitter your future life. You will then see that you have sacrificed her; that for you she has refused men who might have given her a happy home; that you have condemned her to a barren and a solitary old age. Lorini, now is the time to act; your honour demands that you should marry her or give her up."

Lorini had never contemplated such a step before, and he required some moments to bring it fairly before his mind. When he had first adopted Maddalena, a marriage between them was, socially speaking, quite impossible. And though her position in life had undergone such a change, he had always regarded her as a peasant girl.

Darlington half guessed his thoughts.

"I am not an advocate for unequal marriages," he said, "but in this case surely it involves no loss of caste. Malibran, Jenny Lind, Piccolomini—you must know more instances than I do. Even in this country, where art is so little regarded, a celebrated singer, if her character is unimpeached, may be introduced by her husband into his own circle, however high it may be."

"That is true," said Lorini.

"And you who are noble, but whose ambition it is to be an artist."

"That is true!"

"You, least of all, should be deterred by false scruples respecting birth. You should be proud of being the husband of such a woman."

"Yes, I should be indeed," cried he, again taking

the pen into his hand. "I will propose to her at once."

"But," said Darlington, "condescend to conciliate Restoni. Remember that, whatever he may be, he is her father. A few words,—what will they cost you?"

"I will do whatever you advise," said Lorini, who was easily impressed, and he sat down and composed a letter, the tone of which satisfied Darlington completely. He apologised for his heated language, and asked for Maddalena's hand as he would have asked for it had her father been noble.

"Now," said Darlington, "if Restoni refuses to receive this apology, and to give his consent to the marriage, Maddalena will be justified in consulting her own wishes, and I will assist you both to the best of my ability. Now, adieu; I have my other patients to see."

Lorini did not seal the letter. He left it lying on the desk, and read it over now and then. He had said that he would send it, and he would send it, but it was sorely against the grain. It cost him a twinge of pride thus to bow before a man whom he despised. A few moments ago he little thought that he was

about to offer his name to Maddalena, still less that he should bring it to her father bare-headed and on his bended knees.

But when he thought of Maddalena, a kind of calm stole over him. He felt for her a tenderness that he had never known before. He yearned for her. While all had gone on smoothly, he had often supposed that if forced to part from her he could do so without much pain. At times he had felt quite indifferent to her. But now he discovered how much she was to him; and now, that he had been without her for a little while, he felt a gap as it were in his life. Perfect happiness, like perfect health, is never appreciated till it is lost. Its essence is its tranquillity; we are not aware of it till it is gone. He began to feel a little anxious, too. He had a rival, ridiculous and insignificant, but a friend of the father. He came from a country where, every day, girls are compelled to marry against their will, and his eyes were opened. He now saw that Restoni was a dangerous man. Although little suspecting that a trap had been set for his temper, and that the French speculator was a myth, he remembered with some admiration the coolness of

this man, who for once had shown himself his superior. He now began to regret that he had always treated him with a high hand, but after all, thought he, what does it matter? This letter will make all right; it will be strange indeed if an Italian allows his hatred to stand in the way of his interests.

And probably the Marchese was not far wrong. Revenge is almost as short-lived as gratitude; hatred dies out of itself like love; the human passions, to burn long, must be continually fed.

It is true that Restoni's animosity had been well kept up; Lorini had piled fuel on it day after day; but still the same vanity which flamed up under such treatment might be as quickly soothed. Men are never wholly bad, as they are never wholly good. The most cherished enmities have been dispelled by a few kind words, or by a frankly offered hand. Men are as well disposed to receive concessions as they are reluctant to advance them. Lorini had written his letter under a strong impulse. It wanted dignity; it was as hasty and as exaggerated as his anger had been. He said this to himself now that he had read it over; still he determined to send it. He consoled himself by thinking that Maddalena would be

so grateful; that he did it not for Restoni, but for her.

How strange it was that he had never thought of marrying her before. The idea of going back to the petty Florentine world, and of marrying some girl raw from the convent, seemed now to him impossible. Yes, he would marry her; she deserved it, the noble girl.

He began to build castles in the air. They would realise his pet dream of seclusion, music, and love. A knock at the door awoke him from his dreams, and Maynard Jenoure walked in. After some ordinary conversation, Lorini told him of the quarrel, and showed him the letter. Jenoure read it, raised his eyebrows, and returned it.

"Well?" said Lorini.

"Well, I think that Signor Restoni ought to be satisfied with that letter."

"Ought to be!"

"Yes; whether he will be or not is a different question."

"Do you think it possible that he can decline to receive so—so——"

"So very humble an apology?"

"Yes," said Lorini, colouring a little.

"I think it quite possible—highly probable—all but certain."

"Why?"

"I believe that he does not desire to have the honour of calling you his son-in-law, and that being the case, as he dislikes you, he would be glad of the chance to insult you gratuitously."

"He does not wish me to marry Maddalena! He a contadino, I a noble of Florence. Impossible!"

"Ta, ta, ta! We are not in Florence now. Nobody knows anything about him here; he may say that he is a Venetian exile, and that he has a Doge among his ancestry, if he likes. This is very certain: his daughter is making a fortune, and can marry one any day. Atkins, a City Crœsus, is always at her heels, and is ready to be at her feet. He is, in Restoni's eyes, a much better match than you."

"And in Maddalena's?" said Lorini, biting his lip.

"Don't be angry," said Jenoure, laughing. "No, in Maddalena's eyes you are doubtless more precious than a Rothschild or a Monte Cristo. But let us talk only of the father, as it is only to the father you have written."

"Tell me, if you were in my place, would you send this letter?"

"Would I send that letter? Would I kiss the shoes of that dog of a man? Would I, with blue blood in my veins, petition that plebeian for his girl? Pah!"

Lorini looked at his letter with irresolute eyes.

"My dear Lorini, listen to a little common sense before you degrade yourself, as you are about to do. This Restoni probably intends Maddalena for a richer man than yourself; or perhaps, now that she is making money, he is content to let her remain single, and to eat her salary. If this be so, do you think that your letter will make him alter his determination?"

"No," said Lorini, "I do not think he is that sort of man."

"Good. Now suppose that he would prefer seeing his daughter, a Tuscan, married to a noble and tolerably wealthy Florentine, do you not think that he is capable of swallowing a little dirt in his own interest?"

"He has already swallowed so much," thought Lorini.

"Yes," he said again.

"Very well. Then why send a letter, which in the first event would expose you to insult, and which in the second case would be needless? Why not write to the girl herself, and offer her your hand?"

"You do not understand. This letter of mine is a concession, not to Restoni, but to Maddalena's filial duty."

"It must be a very painful concession to you; and why should you make it? If Maddalena loves you, will she refuse to marry you because you have quarrelled with a parent whom she cannot respect? She is indebted to her father for bringing her into the world, and that is all. She is indebted to you for everything besides. She owes as much filial gratitude to you as to him. He is the father of her body, and her past, the miserable gambler; you are the father of her mind, and of her present happiness. But put that aside. If a girl really loves a man, she will give up everything for him; and if she will not do so, she is not worth having. Make her decide between you and him. And if she begs you afterwards to apologise to him, do so as humbly as you please. Then it will be magnanimity: now, excuse

my saying so, it would have very much the appearance of fear."

Lorini tore the letter up. He wrote, under Jenoure's instruction, a cold and haughty letter to Restoni, expressing his regret for the scene which had taken place, but in such a manner that the most ingenious person could not have construed it into an apology. He wrote a letter to Maddalena, which he did not show to his Mentor, in which he poured out his whole heart, and in the tenderest manner offered her his hand. He hoped that the one letter would atone for the other. When this was done he felt greatly relieved, and enjoyed a very recherché little dinner at the "Travellers" with Jenoure.

But the next day came and no letter, and the next and the next. Perhaps she had not received his letter (it had of course been intercepted); he wrote again, and again, and again. He called repeatedly at the house, but was always declined admittance. He lurked round the house at night. Once he heard her singing *Tempo passato*. He went to Darlington, and asked him to take a message from him. But Darlington had been piqued (as the best

of men are apt to be) because his advice had been overruled, and told him to go to Jenoure. He went to Jenoure, who declared that he considered marriage the greatest folly which a man could commit, and that he had determined never to assist a friend in its perpetration. Then he thought of Julie. He told his servant Antonio to bring her to him. Antonio was delighted. He was glad that he could be of service to his master, whom he loved like a dog; and, like all Italians (even of the lowest class), he had a passion for intrigue.

The next day Julie came into Lorini's room. He gave her a letter for her mistress; she refused to take it; she would be *chassée*. He gave her money.

"You are generous, sir," said she; "but these sovereigns would not keep me very long. And what am I to do if I lose my character and my situation?"

"I will get you others," he said; "only do as I tell you," and he gave her more.

"Ah! sir," she said, "I hope that my mistress will not be very angry with me. But if I only mention your name she tells me to hold my tongue. Oh! sir, how could you have been so rash?"

"She forbids you to speak of me?" said Lorini.

"Ah! yes, sir, always. Only once she consented to speak of you. It was soon after that fracas took place. 'Julie,' she said, 'I will never speak to him again till he has wiped those words away. What! because I am a contadina, because he has raised me in the world, is he to have the power of insulting my father? He has done so from the very first, and the favours which he has given me with one hand, he has torn from me with the other. If he really loved me, he would have had more delicacy of heart.'"

Lorini bit his lips, and walked hurriedly to and fro. Julie looked at him with her insidious eyes.

"Forgive me, sir," she said, "for repeating this."

"I am glad you have done so, Julie. They are hard words, but perhaps they are true. Stay, I will write another letter."

He wrote another letter; it was so humble that he was afraid to read it afterwards; but he gave it to her.

This kind of scene occurred several times. Julie brought back word that Maddalena had read the first two or three letters and destroyed them; then she had given them back unanswered to her; lastly, she had threatened to send her away if she ever

brought her another of these missives. At the same time Julie repeated imaginary conversations which had passed between them, and these thoroughly deceived Lorini. In fact, a few grains of truth were mixed up with these fictions, and gave them an appearance of reality. Maddalena opened her heart to this female Jesuit; she often regretted the misunderstandings which had always prevailed between Lorini and her father, and alluded to remonstrances which she had formerly made, and which were only known to Eugenio and herself. Julie skilfully worked these in, and they were proof positive in Lorini's eyes that she was telling him the truth.

He was often exasperated by such sayings, and peevishly retaliated by raking up old quarrels (if such they could be called), expatiated on her faults, denounced her father in no measured terms, and declared that he would speak to neither of them again. But though he thus braved it out before Julie, he felt very wretched when he was alone. His only pleasure was to go to the Opera and hear her sing; to prowl about her house, to see her as she stepped in and out of her carriage, and to watch the light in her chamber window.

Once when he met in the streets a woman who was like her, and thought for a moment it was her, his heart stopped; he felt himself turn pale. He would stand sometimes before a play-bill on the walls, and read her name over and over till he fell into a kind of doze, from which he would scarcely be roused by the contact of the passers-by. Happily this fever of his mind had its intermissions. Sometimes he would almost congratulate himself on the rupture which had concluded his hermit-like existence. At these times, which Jenoure called his "lucid intervals," and which perhaps preserved him from monomania, he would make himself the soul of Jenoure's reunions; he would sit down at the piano and sing gay French *chansonettes;* but when once he tried to sing a sad air (it was one of Bellini's), his voice choked him, and he retired abruptly from the room.

Sometimes he even jested about this grief, which was eating into him. Once when he was walking with Jenoure he saw the name *Restoni* over a shop-door near Leicester Square. "Is this name a fate," said he with a comic gesture, "that it should pursue me everywhere?" But a few moments afterwards,

Jenoure observed that his lips were quivering, and his eyes moist, and he made an excuse to return by the same street.

He heard that "Lucrezia" was in rehearsal, and hurried to the theatre. It would be like seeing Maddalena in a room. He hid himself in a corner of the pit. Some ballet-girls and supernumeraries sitting round him concealed him from the stage.

The theatre at rehearsal presents a curious sight. It is lighted only by some jets of gas over the orchestra, and its walls are covered with brown holland sheets, here and there turned aside from a box, which looks like the black mouth of a cave. In the stalls are seated some men of un-English appearance, some students with open scores, some attentive connoisseurs, and some middle-aged females, relatives of the artists, who sit through the whole performance, and eat sandwiches from reticules.

On the stage you see Art in her dressing-gown and slippers. The prima donna arranges her collar, or nods to a friend in the midst of a bravura air, or deprecates a false note by a smile and a shrug of her

shoulders at the close of a pathetic passage. The chorus pour in with their hats on their heads and umbrellas in their hands; and the tenor makes love with his hands in his pockets. The king enters, eating a pear, and attended by a retinue of courtiers in their shirt-sleeves. The harsh voice of the prompter mingles strangely with the sweet notes of the singers. The leader's voice rings through the house: his word is law; his bâton is a sceptre. But sometimes for a moment the divinity of Art gleams forth. You forget her dirty petticoat and curl-papers; you see only her bare outstretched arm, and her glowing face. At such a moment the orchestra applaud by striking their violin bows on their music desks, and you hear from the thin but critical house, a low *bravo* or *bene*, as if it was in an Italian theatre.

Lorini paid no notice to these details, already so familiar to him. His eyes and his heart were fixed on the stage. For him it was still empty. Presently there was a pause in the performance. Everybody looked round.

"Dov' è Restoni?" cried the leader. "Eccola!"

When she came on he felt a fainting sensation

within him, resembling that from which men suffer in one of the stages of starvation. He covered his face with his hands, and listened to her beautiful voice. A little while after it had ceased he looked up. She was seated at the wings, caressing a little child, whom she had taken on her knees. At that corner a single sun-ray fell upon her face, sublime and suffering as that of a saint. Eugenio clasped his hands.

"Maddalena," he whispered, "thou shalt be mine again, if I kneel to that man for thee!"

Maddalena raised her hand to her hair. The sun-ray fell on a diamond ring. Something cold darted through him. He heard the ballet-girls whispering and tittering together as they pointed it out to one another. He could not understand what they said, but he followed their eyes, and saw Atkins with Restoni in a box.

He had asked some friends to dine with him that night. The party did not go off well. Their host had fits of deep gloom and spasmodic gaiety by turns. At nine o'clock there was a ring at the bell. Antonio brought him in a small parcel. He tore it open carelessly, without looking at the address. A

quantity of jewels fell upon the table. He looked at them as if stupefied. Then he understood what it meant, and burst into tears. His guests went out, avoiding one another's eyes.

CHAPTER IX.

MADDALENA had suffered from an attack of hysteria, the violent expression of a malady which still remained within her, in a smouldering and silent form. During more than a year her heart had fed upon Eugenio. It had been nourished by his words, his caresses, and his looks. Now, starved and languishing, it sought its sustenance among the ashes of the past.

Darlington had recovered her by giving medicine to her mind. He had made her father promise that an apology from Eugenio should reinstate him on his former footing. He also promised her that he would see Lorini. Darlington was so angry with him for not having kept his word that he had cut short all attempts at explanation brusquely enough, and so never knew that Lorini had made her an offer of marriage. Restoni, fearing that the doctor would

play the medium between the two lovers, made haste to pay him his fees, and bowed him out of the house with an air which he could not misunderstand. Thus Maddalena was cut off from all communication with the enemy's camp.

She waited and waited, with her heart full of grief, but no news came. Conquering her pride, she wrote him humble and affectionate letters, imploring him by her love to conquer his pride also; to make this apology, if only as a form; and to restore himself to her. She entrusted these letters to Julie, who carried them to the Baroness Sackowsky. When Maddalena received no answer she became angry.

"If he cared for me," she thought, "he would not treat me so."

Thus the misunderstanding had been formed. It was easy enough to perfect it. Julie had crept into the confidence of both, and widened the crevice to a chasm.

This girl had been induced to play her part, not only by the bribes of her mistress, but by a love of doing evil. When fifteen years of age she had loved violently. The man robbed her of her home and character, amused himself with her for a short time,

and then abandoned her. These things occur every day. Julie entered on a life which, in a few months, can exhaust passion and wither all the nobler feelings of a woman's nature. She was not pretty, and had therefore been obliged to acquire skill in vice to keep herself from starving. She saw but one side of men's natures. It is that side which they turn from society, and which society professes to ignore. Who can wonder, then, that she should become as embittered as she was depraved, and conceive a hatred against the whole human race? Circumstances, the nature of which may be easily imagined, placed a lady in her power. Having made herself the sword of Damocles in the life of this poor creature, whom she forced to take her as femme de chambre, she at length accepted a bribe and a character, and entered the beau monde, where, though only a lady's maid, she contrived to play an important part. She had now been hardened by prosperity, she who had at first been hardened by misfortune. She was never so delighted as when she could have a heart for her pincushion. She had always envied Maddalena, who, a girl of lower birth than herself, had risen higher in the world—who had preserved her purity intact—

whose lover was as good as her own had been infamous. She swore that she would teach her what it was to suffer; and so, as she dressed Maddalena's hair, leaning over her shoulder, she poured poisonous words into her ears, and watched in the glass, with keen eyes, the expression of that wan, worn face.

"Monsieur le Marquis is not worthy of you," she would say. "It is too kind to think of him. He does not think of you. Sometimes I see Antonio. He tells me that his master goes every night with M. Jenoure to *les petits soupers*, where there are actresses, and women that are worse. What do I know of such things? But he tells me that they meet in a magnificent salon. Each gentleman has a servant behind him, and a girl at each side. On Tuesday night, do you know what they did? They gave a supper to the *corps de ballet;* at least, to all who were young and pretty. They supped superbly. They drank champagne. It is frightful, he tells me, how these English women drink. They were all in costume, and afterwards they danced till it was day. He would not tell me how they danced, but he felt ashamed, he said, to see his master there."

"Oh, Julie, Julie, he who is so refined! It cannot be true."

"It cannot be true, mademoiselle! *Mais comment!* Can Antonio, a Tuscan peasant, invent these things out of his own brain? I will tell you what else he said."

Julie described minutely the details of such a supper from a memory well stored with scenes of that kind. Maddalena felt that it was a reality which was being placed before her eyes.

"Poor Eugenio!" she sighed.

"But he amuses himself very well, mademoiselle, your poor Eugenio. They say that he is the cavaliere to Fanny Lightfoot now. And do you know how he speaks of you?"

"He speaks of me, then, to Antonio?" she asked, eagerly.

"Not to Antonio, but before Antonio, to all his friends."

Julie then repeated the peevish words which had sometimes escaped from Lorini in her presence; but exaggerating them, and altering the tone in which they had been said. This was bad enough; but so well had she, with her pretended sympathy, opened

Eugenio's heart, that he had often told her of the vows and the kisses which they had interchanged. These also, she declared, he had boasted of before bad women and tipsy men. Worst of all, she had learnt by heart the letters which Maddalena had written to Eugenio, and quoted passages which he had read out, she said, in the same refined company.

Maddalena replied that Eugenio was weak, that he had been led away by Jenoure, and that he could only have acted thus under the influence of wine.

But who can tell what the poor thing suffered from this (supposed) sacrilege of love? She endured the torments of those women who discover that they have raised up an image of clay within their hearts.

"Eugenio sink into vice! Eugenio betray the holy secrets of the past!"

These thoughts tormented her day and night. They filled her mind waking, and they came to her like spectres while she slept, and gibbered in her face. When she went to the theatre she heard her own name in every whisper. She saw mockery in every face. When the ballet-girls laughed among themselves she fancied that it was at her.

Julie read into her mind, as only women can pene-

trate each other. One day, when she was giving her mistress the rings which she had taken off to wash her hands, she said, "Mademoiselle, why do you wear these ugly Florentine stones? They look so common beside the beautiful diamond which Mr. Atkins gave you."

"I wear this diamond to please my father. He said that it would hurt his friend's feelings to refuse it. So I promised that I would wear it. Mr. Atkins is very good to my father."

"And he is immensely rich, mademoiselle."

"What are his riches to me, Julie?" said Maddalena, severely.

"Nothing, mademoiselle. Only in this country people are respected for being rich, as they are in France for being clever, and in Italy for being noble."

"I fear that in all countries people are respected more for their riches than for anything else; at least, in Italy it is so, as well as in England. Now give me my rings."

"But pardon, mademoiselle, do not wear these common rings."

"They did not cost much money," said Madda-

lena; "but I love them because they were made in my country, and because—because they were given to me."

"By Monsieur le Marquis?"

"Yes, Julie."

"Did he give you many jewels, mademoiselle?"

"Yes; would you like to see them?" said Maddalena, with a sigh. "They are very pretty. I will show them to you. You will find a casket in that drawer."

Julie turned up her nose a little as she looked over the collection of mosaics, turquoises, Florentine gold and Genoese silver ornaments.

"I do not think that these can have cost so much as he pretends."

"What do you say, Julie?"

"Only that Monsieur le Marquis asserts that he has spent enormous sums of money on jewellery for you, besides having kept you and your father for more than a year at his own expense."

"Leave me, Julie, for a few moments," said Maddalena, with a quivering lip. When the girl had left the room, she ran to the door and bolted it. She threw herself on the bed, and cried as if her heart would break. Then she took some paper, and

began to pack the jewels up, crying all the while, and kissing them one by one as she folded them out of sight. But when she saw that the paper was all stained with her tears, she tore it and packed them up afresh. "If he sees that I have been crying, he will think it is for the loss of the jewels themselves. Oh, Eugenio! Eugenio! what have I done to you that you should treat me thus?" She directed the parcel with her own hand, and sent it to Bury Street. Then she went to Restoni and said:

"Father, we have plenty of money at the bank, have we not?"

He started and looked uneasy for a moment. "Yes, my dearest; why?"

"Because we owe the Marchese dei Lorini a great deal of money, and, now that all is over between us, we must begin to pay it back."

"Certainly, my angel, certainly. It shall be done," said Restoni, looking much relieved. Then he added coaxingly, "And you will think no more of this unworthy man?"

"I shall always think of him as our benefactor, father, as the one who has raised us to what we are."

"Pooh! We have to thank your voice, not him.

The manager of the Pergola would have done as much."

"No, father, the manager of the Pergola would not have done as much. He has covered us with kindnesses, and I shall not forget them because he has—because he has said some harsh and foolish words which he is too proud to retract."

Restoni had the sense to see that the more he abused Lorini the more Maddalena would praise him, and assuring her that he would go to the bank at once and carry our her wishes, he left the house.

Restoni had not been idle since he had arrived in England. Every Saturday he went to Coutts', from which he returned, his pockets stuffed with bank-notes. He paid all the bills, and Maddalena supposed that the balance was at the bank when she thought of money at all, which was not often. At the commencement of his intimacy with Atkins, he had asked many questions about the investment of money, and that pillar of the Stock Exchange had given him much good advice. Upon this, however, he had not acted, preferring to have a floating capital for reasons of his own.

Atkins had procured him admission into the

Vauxhall, a small club on the model of the institutions in St. James's Street and Pall Mall, but which one can enter within a month after being proposed. It was composed for the most part of rich shopkeepers, with a few City and professional men. It was chiefly celebrated for its hard play, for gambling in England has now descended from the aristocracy to their tradesmen. It was the only club in London where the card and billiard rooms were open on Sunday; and on the Sabbath evening respectable citizens, who had just been with their families to church, would be seen playing at whist (pound points), at loo (unlimited), and at pool (five pounds and one). As soon as Restoni had joined the club, he aspired to become a member of this set.

At that moment the Derby excitement was at its betting climax. Restoni began to study the science of horse-racing, the rudiments of which he had learnt at Florence, where the sport was originated in 1288, according to Goro Dati, but where the horses run without jockeys. He rapidly made himself acquainted with the arithmetic of odds, and learnt to talk of the "favourite" and the "field"

with the proper twang. He began to make a book. He took in the *Field* and *Bell's Life*, studied history in the *Racing Calendar* and the *Turf Guide;* traced pedigrees, and became a genealogist. He gave his attention to horseflesh, frequented stables on Sunday afternoons, was put up at Tattersall's, and might be seen with "gents," whose whiskers closely trimmed, whose tight trousers and cut-away coats, and white scarves and horse-shoe pins, gave them a physiognomy peculiar to the turf. He had even acquired the habit of chewing little bits of straw. Jacopo Restoni was in fact a very clever man, though fortune had not favoured him hitherto. He was a master of all the Italian games, and though in England he had been forced to learn a new dialect in cards (for there are forty in the Italian and fifty-two in the English pack), he was already regarded as an adept; and at the Vauxhall was courted as a partner at whist. He had an astounding memory, and a mathematical brain, but he had a foible,—he was superstitious. At Florence he had always been a devotee of the dream-book, in which, spite of repeated losses, his faith remained unshaken. He had another defect, more serious

still perhaps. He had become a toper. He had always had a bias that way, and in Florence had often drowned his losses in aguardente. But there no one set him the example, or kept him company; he found himself isolated by his vice, and viewed with that kind of curiosity which is bestowed upon an ostrich eating glass. Popular opinion in Italy sets strongly against drunkards, and the absurd maxim of the Jesuits is contradicted by statistics. In the north of Europe, more ardent spirits are consumed annually than in the south of Europe; more during the winter in England than during the summer.

In England, debauchery (like gambling) is no longer a fashion. The days of the three-bottle men have for ever passed. The Addisons, the Porsons, the Sheridans, the Foxes, are no more. The old gentlemen of the past generation, who still dine at the clubs, take solemn warning from the temperate youths who glare sternly at them across the room. They allow themselves to get a little flushed, but that is all. Among tradesmen in towns, among farmers in the country, and among people in the colonies, a greater freedom prevails;

and among the lower classes, as every doctor and lawyer knows, drink is the chief source of disease and crime. Restoni had a passion for whisky, in which he was encouraged to indulge by the invitations and examples of his friends. This powerful spirit soon mounted to his unseasoned head, and he had not the sense to leave off as soon as it began to swim. Accordingly he was often very drunk, on which occasions he always wished to bet, and was in no want of takers, as may be supposed. However, as he never returned home till after Maddalena had gone to bed, she remained for a long time ignorant of all this. But one night he was brought to Albemarle Street in a cab insensible. His watch and breast-pin had disappeared; there was, indeed, nothing in his pockets except an envelope, by means of which his address had probably been discovered. Maddalena sent for Darlington, who did not find the case very difficult to treat. The patient was put to bed with his head carefully raised, and with a cooling-draught to be given the next day. When he came down stairs, he found Maddalena crying. There are few things sadder in the world than the grief of a girl whose father has brutalised him-

self before her eyes. Maddalena knew that he was a gambler; she had deeply deplored a passion which had reduced him to poverty, to meanness, to deceit, to all those petty vices which crawl in the trail of every great one. But then gambling is as common in Italy as drunkenness is rare; the one is regarded as an indiscretion, the other as a bestiality. Never had she felt such shame and sorrow as she suffered now.

The good doctor sat down by her side, and talked to her for a little while. His voice was anodyne. When he told her to dry up her tears and say good night, she obeyed him quite submissively. But as he was going from the room he felt a soft hand take his. Turning round, he met the light of her deep, earnest eyes. "Oh, sir," she said, "I have great troubles, and I feel that there are more to come. I am a poor, ignorant girl. Tell me how I am to bear them. Will you be my friend?"

"My dear," he said, taking both her hands, "your father will not wish me to come here often, after I have seen him as he is to-night. But if at any time you should need some one to advise you, or to assist you in any way, come to me."

"Oh, thank you, sir," she said. Then she added, "I wish that I could see you every day. I have no friend now."

"We all have a Friend if we choose to go to Him," he said.

"Who is it, sir?"

"What is this?" said he, smiling, and touching a little medal which hung on her chain.

"Ah!" she said, "it was given me by a good lady at whose house I sang one afternoon, and I have not even read what is on it yet."

"Read it then," said he.

She raised it to her eyes, and as she read it, she sank upon her knees. "*O Marie, conçue sans pêche, priez pour nous qui avons recours à vous.*"

She repeated these words a hundred times, and said, "Ah, Mother, I had forgotten you when I was happy. Console me in my sorrow, and forgive me for my sin."

She did not see her doctor go. She remained for hours in a sad but soft and pleasing reverie. At day-break she was roused by a distant bell, and traced it to a chapel in some mews near Farm Street.

CHAPTER X.

It was a day in the middle of June, about five o'clock P.M. A long line of carriages wound through a street in the neighbourhood of Park Lane, stopped in turn before a house from which sounds of music issued forth, discharged their silk or muslin cargoes under a striped porch, and took up their position on the other side of the way. The Countess of Conway was giving a tea. Her front drawing-room was almost filled with ladies, who, divided into groups, chattered with great animation, and stared at all who came in through gold eye-glasses. In the back room was a small table covered with a harlequin set of cups and saucers. Servants passed in and out continually with trays of ices and tea. Sometimes a couple glided in there to flirt.

By the door was a cluster of young men, who

were good-looking and well dressed, but who showed a little too plainly that their faces and their toilets monopolised their brains. These youthful guardsmen and incipient diplomatists are to be found in every London house; they are the mainstay of balls, where they are required only to use their legs, and form an important element in the world. In Paris the hair-dresser, the tailor, and the dancing-master cannot ensure a man's success in society; but in London, girls reign.

Now and then a man of different calibre would enter the room. He would be generally middle-aged; toilette négligée but harmonious; small boots and gloves, with a brilliant hat and tiny riding-switch in his hand. He would immediately plunge into the room, glide from group to group, sowing smiles, and after glittering for half an hour at the longest, disappear. This is the genuine man of fashion, who in London goes but little into social crowds, having the *entrée* of every house in which he desires to go.

It was evident from the undisguised ennui of the men, and the somewhat affected gaiety of the women, that the party was not going off very well. These

kettle-drums, as they are vulgarly called, are, comparatively speaking, a new institution (they have been generally in vogue about five years), and will probably soon die out. They are the nearest approach which the English have as yet made to the freedom of the continental reception, but the experiment has failed. The English will not abandon the rigidity of their social forms. It would seem that slavery is the natural state of man, and that freedom in politics must be expiated by tyranny in manners. Besides, these reunions are not suited to a nation which is devoid of the genius of conversation; men will not go to them, and in London a party without men is like a fair without customers.

The name of Mr. Jenoure resounded from below and ascended to the drawing-rooms, carried up each half-dozen steps by a different voice, and with a slightly different pronunciation. There was a great rustling of bonnets. The men muttered together with sulky faces, "Who's that he's got with him?" "Oh, I don't know; one of his favourite foreigners, of course."

In the meantime, feminine whispers were flut-

tering round the room. "Is that an Italian who came with him?"

"A Spaniard more likely. You know he spent the winter at Cadiz."

"Yes, so he told me; studying bull-fights and Murillos, and making love to Andalusians."

"No, it must be one of Lady Conway's Italian friends. See how she is shaking hands with him —the dear, warm-hearted old thing. He has just bowed to Mrs. Seton. She will be sure to know him, if he is anybody. That is right, beckon to her. Caroline, love, who is he?"

"The Marchese dei Lorini, a Florentine. New title, but one of the oldest families there."

"Is he well off?"

"For an Italian, yes. He has an old palazzo, with a villa, and a rather large estate."

"Is he nice?"

"My dear, two years ago he was *the* man at Florence. Hs composes beautiful airs, and sings them himself; waltzes divinely, and, though he makes no pretensions to be witty, his conversation is always pleasing."

"He will be an acquisition."

"A lady all of us know will be of the same opinion."

"Who is that?"

"The Baroness Sackowsky."

"Oh, does she know him?"

"Very well indeed."

There is something light, vaporous, volatile, impalpable, uncompromising, which floats between acquaintances in good society, and conveys facts which *in public* must not be expressed in anything so coarse as words. It may be contained in a modulation of the voice, a certain curl in the smile, a gleam from the eye. In that *very well indeed,* there was a story—in outline only, but complete. A faint smile circled round several lips; two little girls who sat by listening jogged each other's elbows, and all turned their eyes with fresh curiosity upon Lorini.

"I have brought him to you at last, Lady Conway," said Jenoure.

"You have been very naughty to neglect an old friend," she said, shaking his hand with English cordiality; "but only young women may resent injuries. I forgive you under conditions."

"Acceded, miladi; now what are they to be?"

"You must let me introduce you everywhere."

"You are too kind."

"No; I intend to be very severe; and I warn you that your life will be laborious. To-morrow night I shall take you to Almack's. It has much degenerated, but it is still worth going to. When I was first married, it was exclusive enough; one had to know a Patroness really very well to obtain an entrée; but about fifteen years ago (I have passed that age when one suppresses dates you see), it began to lose its prestige. At last it became so common that good people would not go there at all. It was closed for some years, and has lately been revived with tolerable success. But it is no longer that Almack's of my girlhood; in fact, society has very much changed since then. It is the fashion now to say that there are only two really exclusive places—Jenoure's studio and Marlborough House. You have your entrée to the one; I must try to get you one for the other."

Lorini having thanked her, she sank her voice a little, and said, with a smile, "I expect the Baroness here directly."

"Who, miladi?"

"The Baroness Sackowsky."

"What! is she in England?"

"You mean to say that you did not know it?"

"No," said he.

She gave an incredulous smile, and thought the more highly of him for his caution. The Baroness came in at that moment. She was in demi-toilette, that she might show her hair, which she delighted to dress in fantastic fashions.

"I need not introduce you to each other," said Lady Conway, with a malicious look.

The Baroness held out her hand to Lorini. "No," she said, "we are very old friends; are we not, Marchese?"

Lorini of course did not allow himself to be confused. The group at the end of the room detected nothing, though they examined them closely, and without their eye-glasses. The little girls saw with astonishment, their elders with approbation, that the two sat in different parts of the room, and flirted industriously without exchanging a look palpable enough to be intercepted. But long practice had taught them to converse in a language of secret signs

with ease and impunity before a crowd. Lorini sang once; the Baroness foresaw that he would be a lion. On the other hand, he wished to amuse himself; the Baroness was a queen of the season. It is thus that people form liaisons in the world.

"Do you go to Almack's to-morrow?" said he, as he made his bow at seven o'clock.

"I do not know," she replied.

It is thus that they make their assignations.

There is little to describe at Almack's. It is a huge room lighted by glaring chandeliers, lined with rout benches, an orchestra in a gallery, and side-rooms where tea and bread-and-butter are served across a counter.

Neither Lady Conway nor Mrs. Seton had been at Florence since Lorini's rupture with the Baroness, and had heard nothing of Maddalena. But the Princess Pallidenese was also in London, and at Almack's that same night. She made such good use of her time, that before the Baroness, who was always late, had arrived, a hundred mutual acquaintances had been informed of the whole affair. Her version of it, as may be supposed, did not place

the fair Russian in a good light. Lorini had jilted her in favour of his soprano, of whom being now tired, he consented to return to the paths of virtue. Nobody blamed Lorini; he did right in giving up Restoni; it would be a pity for so distingué a young man to make a liaison outside society, even with a prima donna. Nobody pitied Maddalena, whom they supposed to be his discarded mistress. But had they known the shocking truth that he had loved this girl truly, and that he had even wished to make her his wife, what an object of ridicule he would have been!

The Princess Pallidenese was a woman *entre deux ages*. She existed chiefly upon the reputation of her former conquests, and sometimes captivated very young men, who have generally a taste for ripe women, even when they are a little withered. But in her best days she had never possessed the art of retaining men; she made a boast of changing her lovers often; she did so really because she was obliged.

She was encircled on the present occasion by a crowd of women; she had announced her intention of attacking the Baroness, and they came round

"Ah, you think so," said Lorini, staring at her.

"Yes; but imagine my being jealous of her as a woman. Ah, I should have seen her first. I met her the other day in the street. Why, she is as yellow as an orange. She walks like an old woman. She has no style—no tournure. To be sure, she has good eyes, but so have all the Italians."

Lorini hesitated. The Baroness continued, studying him as she spoke.

"Eugenio, I am ashamed of myself; but we women of the world, what do we know of an artist's mind? I could not understand that a man could give up everything for an idea. I understand it now, and I think it noble of you. You forgive me, do you not?"

Lorini reflected for a few moments. She supposed that his relations with Maddalena had been no closer than those of patron and protégée. Why should he undeceive her? He could not tell the whole truth. He had no desire to be laughed at; and if he told half the truth, Maddalena's reputation would be sure to suffer. So he replied:

"It was a very natural mistake, and you were not

the only one who made it. Appearances were certainly against me."

The next day he paid her a visit of ceremony at Thomas's Hotel.

He had spent a sleepless night after receiving back the presents which he had made to Maddalena in their happy days. This naturally appeared to him an outrage, unnecessary and unprovoked. Having framed a dozen nonsensical projects of revenge, he took the more manly resolution of driving her altogether from his mind."

"*Teach, oh teach me to forget,*" said Jenoure, laughing. "Is that the burden of your song? Well, mon cher, I can give you the choice of two specifics. The one is to write your opera. Once immerge yourself in that, and you will soon forget that women exist in the world."

Lorini shook his head.

"I must bury myself somewhere before I begin."

"Yes," said Jenoure, "I remember the feeling. One approaches one's first great work with a kind of awe. It is like a first amour. But one soon leaves all that behind, and begins a masterpiece or a woman as

one opens a fresh bottle or a box of cigars. However, you must try the other. It is Society. Put yourself in my hands, and I will engage that in a week's time you will be cured. How is it that women feel more deeply than men? It is because they have no distractions. They nurse their sensations. They spend hours in cherishing a joy or in brooding over a grief. Their life is made up of sentiment. Emotions are its only incidents. But men are compelled by their vocations to banish a subject from their minds during several hours of the day. The City man must give up his mind to his business, the barrister to his brief, the member of Parliament to his party, the officer to his men. They have little time for reveries. They acquire the habit of shaking off a thought. It is this which partly explains the inconstancy of our sex. Now you, doing nothing, seeing nobody, dreaming all day, cuddling your woes, reduce yourself to the level of a woman. Rise and escape yourself. Society in England will be a novelty for you. It will interest you. Your time will be devoured by déjeûners, dinners, dances, and drums. Perhaps you will have a bonne fortune. Our English women have a penchant for foreigners;

at all events, I will answer for it that you will be occupied. What do you say? Will you take your first dose this afternoon? Lady Conway receives."

Lorini plunged, and was introduced into the heart of London life. He was presented at Court, went to the Queen's balls, and to Marlborough House; that is to say, he went everywhere else. He took a suite of apartments in St. James's Street, bought horses and a mail phaeton, with a tiger and a groom; subscribed to both opera houses, laid in wine and cigars, gave dinners at Francatelli's, committed every extravagance that was in *bon ton*, spent a great deal of money, and, as Jenoure predicted, had very little time to think of Maddalena. He made a great success in society. There is more analogy between the Italian character and the English—at least, on the surface—than between that nation and the French. The Italian is grave and reserved, qualities which the English venerate; while the Frenchman shocks them by his noisy and garrulous vivacity. Lorini also had been well introduced.

In England, Society is a stage, on which it is difficult to enter unless one has been brought up to it.

Women of the middle classes can never get in, except sometimes viâ the altar; or now and then, a woman of high rank adopts and presents a very beautiful girl. Of the men who are born outside the magic circle, few obtain an entrée, and they must shine or disappear. Some "run" a season, and are heard of no more. They are thin-creamed, and can be skimmed but once. Travellers who have made one journey, authors who have written one book, artists who have created one idea in paint or stone, speculators who have made one fortune, are the usual victims of this three months' triumph. I say victims, for those who have once tasted the sudden excitements of a London season are, like those who have once smelt the foot-lights, utterly unfitted thereby for the prose of ordinary life. They hang round the scenes of their former greatness as long as they can, tell anecdotes thereof as long as any one will listen to them, and die young. Others, more fortunate or more deserving, are "revived" year after year, and end by becoming stock-pieces in the Répertoire Aristocratique; but they are always liable to be erased by "novelties," and often dwindle into toad-eaters in their old age. There is nothing so melan-

choly as the career of talented parvenus in the salons of the upper world. What degradations they will submit to, what insults they will endure, how basely they will intrigue, to gain a cold bow in some great house, and to be able to say, "Last Saturday night, when I was at such and such a house." I must explain that Jenoure was not one of these. Art was not his garment, but his gem. Though a commoner, he belonged to the high world. He was connected with some of the best families in England. His name was niched in Burke's "Landed Gentry." His estate was large, ancestral, and unencumbered. He had been asked to stand for his county, but sneered at parliamentary honours, as he did at most other things. His eccentricities had made him a fashion. With men he was cold and haughty; indeed, he was only polite to foreigners, to his inferiors, and to one or two intimate friends. Whenever he met a man who, relying on high rank or large fortune, presumed to tyrannise in society, he flew at him immediately. He had been nick-named the "Bore-killer." This combativeness was indigenous in his nature, and he had cultivated it on principle. Profound in his knowledge of the English

heart, he treated men of the world like stinging-nettles, and preferred crushing to caressing them. Women think much of a man who is hated, but not ridiculed; and with the fair sex he was never cynical, nor rude. An exquisite politeness which he had acquired in countries more civilised than England; a familiarity which was always graceful, and which never descended to vulgarity; a finesse which was almost feminine; a well-feigned expansion of heart, a flow of language, and a caressing voice, made him very successful among them. Having entrapped them by their vanity, he had the power of fascinating them into slaves. Women have, like serpents, their charmers, and, like wild beasts, their Van Amburgh. He was one.

Between Jenoure and Lady Conway, Lorini saw all that there was to be seen in London. He went to the most sumptuous dinners, strolled though the most magnificent salons, and flirted with the handsomest women that can be found in the world. He was introduced into the demi-monde, which in England is small, stupid, and possesses a domestic character. The vulgarities of vice in casinos, gardens, and arcades, he studiously shunned. In Paris the

mere spectator can amuse himself; but in London there is nothing so dull as dissipation.

He visited the Baroness rarely at her hotel, but saw her every afternoon—it does not matter where. London is a large and convenient city. Moreover, they met most days in society. They were always asked to the same houses. Britannia, the prude of the ocean, does not object to a little naughtiness, if it be arranged in a polite and fashionable way. You may do what you please, but it must be always as a double-entendre; you must not compromise the modest lady; so that if you are found out she may revile your vice in the salon, and ridicule your clumsiness in the boudoir. Ah, Dio mio, what a genteel comedy life is! Look at the dear creatures, how they are bantering the Baroness about Lorini. What glistening eyes! what pretty pleasantries! what arch and wicked smiles! Now, suppose the General Sackowsky descended upon them from Siberia, or Kamschatka, or the North Pole, or wherever the man might be, and created an esclandre. God! what a change there would be! The lips which now run with honey would discharge jets of gall; the hands which now pelt with playful roses would seek missiles

of a very different kind; and those with most guilt among them would scramble for the first stone.

However, I will not follow in the ruts of those moralists who supply vices to the beau-monde from their own imagination. The women of the upper classes are less corrupt than the London bourgeoises; their Court is the most virtuous in Europe; they never countenance open vice, though they are sometimes compelled to suffer it in women whose rank raises them above all law. But they are as indulgent to foreigners as they are severe among themselves. Indeed they appear to suppose that participation in other people's connubial rights is a continental custom, with which, however deplorable, it would be as useless to contend as with nudity in the tropics, or polygamy in the East.

One evening Lorini was dining with the Baroness at her hotel. Her valet brought in a letter. "Eugenio," said she, "Mrs. Seton has sent us her box for the opera to-night; shall we go?"

"If you please."

"I am dying to hear an opera again. There is so

much dinner society in London, that one rarely has the opportunity. How wearisome they are, these English dinners. And then the separation of the sexes, what a barbarous custom that is."

"Jenoure has explained it to me," said Lorini. "In the hard-drinking days of England, the ladies left the room directly after dinner, and saw no more of the gentlemen, who were invariably carried up to bed. When drunkenness became less general, some of the gentlemen would join the ladies, after an interval of two or three hours. This interval has been gradually lessening, and, he thinks, will eventually disappear. By-the-bye," he said, starting a little, "what is it to-night?"

"Patti, Ronconi, and Mario in the *Barbiere*, I believe. However, we shall see when we get there."

They found that it was *Linda di Chamouni*. They arrived very late; the third act was about to commence.

It will be remembered that, in the second act, Linda, betrayed by her lover and cursed by her father, becomes insane. She is led back to her home in Savoy by the faithful Pierrot, who goes before her

playing an air, which recalls to her mind her home. She follows him like an animal, dragging her weary limbs along. The scene is among the mountains of Savoy. The snow is falling.

As soon as the first notes of the melancholy music arose, Eugenio felt something steal into his heart. He half covered himself with the curtain of the box, and fixed his swimming eyes upon the stage. And when he saw Maddalena descending the hill with dejected steps, and uttering plaintive cries, he felt a choking sensation in his throat. How well he knew that opera! How often they had sung that music together! Every note was a memory, Not a sound, not a movement that did not call up a recollection.

She began to sing. He threw his soul into his eyes and fixed them upon her. She turned and recognised him; the change in her face was scarcely perceptible; but nothing escapes a lover's eye. He knows his mistress's face as the sailor knows the sea. She shed upon him a languid melting look, a look such as she had given him in days gone by. The tears rushed to his eyes; his heart cried out for her. But then her eyes froze; she had seen the woman

who was with him. She turned her back upon him, and crossed over to the other side of the stage. At this moment her lover returns to her; he speaks to her. She remembers that a voice like that one day deceived her. Here Maddalena returned, and fixing her eyes full upon Eugenio, sang, in a cold hollow voice,—

> "Egual voce, eguale accento,
> Cosi un di mi lusingò."

Eugenio buried himself in the back of the box, and then he heard again the voice of Maddalena, who cried in an agony of real despair,—

> "Non fu lui, non è il mio Carlo."

The gallery yelled applause. Eugenio sobbed. The Baroness affected to be engrossed by the music, and determined to make no more experiments. Maddalena sang the reconciliation scene on the side of the stage furthest from the box, and the finale, as she had never sung before. But she knew it not; already half insensible, she had not heard the sound of her own voice. She passed by a mechanical effort from the stage into her dressing-room, where she fainted away.

When she recovered her senses, she found herself lying on a sofa, covered with flowers; her dress was open. Julie was bathing her forehead with eau-de-cologne. From without came a muffled roaring sound. "What is that?" she cried. The stage-manager rapped loudly at the door. "Restoni! Restoni! they are calling you."

"Oh, leave me alone," she murmured, "leave me alone."

He entered the room. "For God's sake, come," he said, "or they will tear the house down. Listen to them now." She heard her name howled by loud and furious voices, accompanied with cat-calls, hisses, and the clattering of feet. "Oh, these brutes!" she said, and staggered across the room. Julie followed her, adjusting her dress. The tenor conducted her across the stage, and this time she fainted at the wings.

The Baroness made Eugenio take her to supper that night at a restaurant where they could enter by a private door. A pair of soft lips soaked in champagne sponged Maddalena from his mind. And she at the same hour was kneeling before a painting of the Madonna, her hands clasped,

and the tears running down her cheeks. Thus women in their afflictions seek for consolation in prayer; while men can find it in the powdered arms of vice.

CHAPTER XI.

After Maddalena had sent back the jewels, she divided her life between her art and her religion. She bought a painting of the Madonna of the Seven Dolors, which she hung up in her room; its suffering and patient face was a lesson of resignation which her heart learnt every day.

In the early morning she went to mass in the Farm Street Chapel, spent her forenoon in practising when she did not go to rehearsal, dined at three o'clock, went to vespers afterwards, and, as soon as she had returned from the theatre, to bed.

Her devotion for her art, which had sometimes languished, now became more intense than it had ever been. When she studied such parts as those of Linda, Lucia, or Margherita, she lived in an ideal world; she had day-dreams which sometimes rose to ecstasies; she had moments of genius, when her

soul passed into an idea, when she lost all consciousness of self; when she heard her own voice, being sung as it were by some one else; when she felt herself the personage whom she portrayed; when all around her became real; when, in a forest scene, she heard the rustling of the leaves, and the bubbling of water, and inhaled the perfume of flowers, and felt the ground soft beneath her feet.

The unexpected sight of Eugenio revived her grief. His name was now mingled with all her prayers, which became wild, hysterical, sometimes blasphemous. At the theatre she sang in such a manner that at Genoa or at Naples she would have been hooted from the stage. The English audience, diffident of their own judgment and with untrained ears, sat before her in puzzled silence; till one night she forgot the words of her part, and then for the first time heard the hiss of the gallery, so terrible for the singer. From that moment she loathed her art. Now she learnt how difficult it was to sing gay music with a heart full of grief, or to preserve her sang-froid in scenes which presented her own sorrows to her mind. Now she felt how degrading it was to daub her cheeks with paint, to stalk the stage by rule, to

stifle her own sentiments that she might excite emotions in others, to parody her own passions before the public, to smile or weep according to the programme, and to humble herself before a tribunal which she despised. The poet and the composer and the painter are above the public and separated from them; they hear but little of the praise or blame which is recorded against their works. But between the singer and the public there is no veil. Her verdict is pronounced at once. Every night her peace of mind depends upon some hundred dirty hands. Then, while her success is scraped on sand, her failures are cut in steel. Applause is soon forgotten, but a hiss never dies.

Restoni observed with satisfaction her growing aversion for her art, and sent an Italian into the gallery to hiss. It suited his views that she should wish to retire from the stage. Atkins had proposed some time ago for his daughter's hand. Restoni, who had been waiting patiently for this offer, appeared overtaken by surprise.

"I had no intention," he said, "of marrying her just at present, and I will tell you why. You can imagine that my daughter has not obtained this

perfection in singing without a long and expensive education. You must know that we are one of the oldest families in Tuscany. We were always poor, but we lived upon our own lands, and had enough for our ordinary wants. But unhappily, or perhaps happily (who can say ?), my girl was seized with a passion for the stage. I opposed it for a long time; in the first place, because I had no money to risk in a speculation; in the second place, because my pride revolted against such a step in the daughter of a noble family. But she began to pine away: family pride relented, parental love prevailed. I sold my lands; the education of her voice, which extended over five years, devoured our little fortune; we were even forced to incur some debts, which hitherto have swallowed up all our gains. Well, the Marchese dei Lorini, whom you have seen here, wished to marry Maddalena. When I heard this, I said, 'My daughter, if you love the Marchese, marry him and be happy. I want no money. I can return to Florence and live upon polenta.' She replied, 'Father, I have no desire to marry a man of fashion, and to have twenty rivals for the heart which should belong to me alone. If I marry any one it shall be

an Englishman, for they make good husbands, and are honest men. But I have determined to remain independent till I have bought back our estate.' "

"If it is only a question of money," said Atkins eagerly, "there need be no difficulty whatever. I am rich" (Restoni made a gesture of surprise), "and under any circumstances I should endeavour to repurchase land which had belonged to my wife's family."

"No, sir," replied Restoni, with a virtuous air, "I cannot take advantage of your generosity. The sum is so large that we calculated only the other day that with the best engagements we could not expect to regain it under three years' time. In case of illness (and Maddalena is delicate) it might be as much as five years before she would be at liberty to marry."

Atkins became more eager as Restoni became more coy. Finally he promised to pay over to Restoni any sum that he chose to name. The latter having skilfully worked him up to that pitch, agreed to consult with Maddalena. Atkins went away in a state of ecstasy. His sister observed that his face beamed when he came in: that he was restless, and

that he sometimes smiled. She asked him coaxingly what it was? He replied "that he had done a good stroke of business that day on 'Change." She did not believe this, and watched him keenly, but discovered nothing.

It will doubtless appear strange that a shrewd man of business should have been gulled by so shallow a story as that which Restoni had palmed upon him. But, as I have already explained, Atkins was only wise between the hours of ten and four. Besides, he was in love; he wished to be deceived; had the lie glared him in the face he would have closed his eyes.

At first, desirous of marrying, and having the British penchant for celebrities, he had sought out Maddalena as a good investment of his passions. He wished to marry this idol of the public, that some of her glory might be reflected upon him, and that he might be talked of at the Craven. But when he became acquainted with her, the polite indifference with which she treated him piqued his pride, and awoke within him that spirit of stubborn energy which had made him a rich man. He knew that she did not care for him, but had those whom he had

outwitted in business cared for him? He flattered himself that he could win a woman's hand, as he had won "good things" on 'Change, by industry and perseverance.

He also knew that his sister might refuse to see him again if he married this girl, who was a foreigner, an actress, and, worst of all, a Roman Catholic. But he had already untied the first knot in his domestic apron-strings: he felt little hesitation in tearing himself loose altogether. However, he determined to hide his connubial negotiations, and to say nothing about it till the deed was done.

Maddalena had always felt against him one of those nervous antipathies which are devoid of animosity, but which exceed in violence the most bitter hatred. She could scarcely bear without flinching the look of his stony eyes. His voice, so harsh and metallic, gave pain to her delicate ear. His movements, so stiff and uncouth, annoyed her eyes. Even when he knocked at the door she shuddered from head to foot.

When Restoni asked her to marry this man, she flung herself at his feet and said,

"Oh, father, speak to me no more of love or marriage; let us remain together all our lives. I will make you rich, do not fear. This man will rob me of my art, which is now my life."

She was so excited that he judged it advisable to reassure her, and to say no more just then. But he recurred to the subject from time to time. He confessed that he had lost all her salary at the Epsom and Ascot Races. He also said that the sum which he had paid (professedly) to Lorini had prevented him from meeting his engagements. He had heavy debts which Atkins would pay off when he became his son-in-law. Her marriage alone could save him from being sent to prison.

"Can we not borrow money upon my voice?" said Maddalena, who believed him.

"Only at a fearful sacrifice," he replied. "Thou knowest what the doctor said. Thy voice, having once suffered from aphonia, may be attacked again; it may perish in a night. What, then, are we to do? We have no money. Having tasted luxury, we should fall again into the dirt."

"My father," she said, "for you I have given up Eugenio, and I shall never speak to him again. But

I will not debase myself before his eyes. He shall not be able to say that I married a man whom I did not love. I will force him to respect me at least."

"Dost thou suppose, then, that he ever thinks of thee? Hast thou not heard that the Baroness Sackowsky is here?"

Maddalena shook her head. He had promised her that he would never be intimate with that woman again; and, whatever faults Eugenio may have, he would never break his word.

Restoni did not reply, but as he went out of the room he looked back at her with pity in his eyes. This look haunted Maddalena. Restoni conveyed a wish through Julie to the Baroness, that she would come to the theatre with Lorini. The Baroness consented, actuated partly by curiosity. The result has been described.

In the midst of all her sufferings, Maddalena felt a kind of bitter joy. He had taken that woman there to insult her—he had not forgotten her then. He must have cared for her a little, or he would not have done that. It was weakness; it was bad taste; it was small malice; but she preferred all these to his indifference. And if she married Mr. Atkins,

what would he think? That she had married him from the same feeling which induced him to parade the Baroness before her.

Women, do you think it strange that Eugenio could still influence her life? He had left unanswered (at least so she thought) those letters which she had written with her tears; he had defiled her name in scenes of filthy dissipation; he had meanly boasted of the money which he had spent upon her. And yet she could not despise him. Her wonderful woman's instinct struggled with her reason and whispered to her that it was not true. She looked back upon that long twelvemonth of love. She treasured up the recollections of his affection, of his honour, of his generosity. How could he do anything unkind or mean? And now, though she could not disbelieve her eyes, she could still make excuses for him. When her father spoke to her again about her marriage, she said in a firm voice:

"Father, my love is pledged to Eugenio."

"What!" cried he, "pledged to Eugenio! Dost thou expect then to become his wife?"

"No father, but I shall remain his widow. The Eugenio whom I love is no more. But at Florence

I was wedded to him by pure and tender ties. I will remain faithful to his memory."

Restoni walked up and down the room chafing with rage. Then his eyes flashed. "Hast thou forgotten thy oath?" he cried.

"Have you forgotten your pledge?" she replied. "A father's promise should be as sacred as a daughter's oath."

"True, true, my girl. I will speak of that no more." Bah! thought he, I have another card yet to play. He pondered for a moment or two, then sat down by her and took her hand. "My daughter," he said, "I lament this infatuation, for it compels me to inflict a heavy blow upon thee. But I think it best for thee that I should do so. I always distrusted the Marchese, and I know that these noblemen like to make toys of poor girls' hearts. However, when proofs of his treachery came into my hands, I thought it best to hide them from thee. I did not wish to give thee unnecessary pain."

"What, what!" she cried, trembling and seizing his hand.

"No, no, my child, not now. Let me keep it from thee till thou art more calm."

"What is this *It?*" she cried. "Tell me at once, I command you. My father, tell me," she murmured, kissing his hand, upon which the tears fell fast.

He went out and returned in a few moments with a letter; he placed it in her hands, and again left her. Julie was in the passage. Several minutes passed. The girl, adjusting her dress, stole on tip-toe to the door and peeped through the key-hole. She turned round to Restoni, smiling, and beckoned to him. He also looked in. Maddalena was sitting by the window; her face was slate-coloured; sometimes she took the letter from her lap and read it over, following the words with her finger. She did not cry; but presently she began to rock herself to and fro, uttering a low wailing sound.

"My God, how she loves this fop of a man," whispered Julie.

"Poor Maddalena," said Restoni, in an uncertain tone.

"Idiot!" hissed Julie, seizing him by the wrist and dragging him away. "You would spoil all, then. Oh, what wavering fools men are!"

"Only a momentary weakness," said Restoni,

wiping his forehead. "The best of us are but human. It will be all right now—eh?"

"She will be callous after this, and you will be able to sell her to whom you please, like a sack of wheat."

"Look upon her as Mrs. Atkins then."

"And I have my percentage the day beforehand, recollect."

"Certainly. Do you think that I have forgotten my promise?"

"No, *mon cher*," said the girl, with an impudent laugh. I know you regret it every day. But what is the use? You dare not break it, you know?"

The letter was as follows:—

"DEAR BARONESS,—Can you really believe that I am going to marry the little Restoni? Florence must be insane to listen to such a rumour. This girl is a contadina; I am a Codino. Eagles do not mate with barn-door fowls, nor patricians with peasants. Do you wish to know why I have secluded myself from society, why I spend all my time with her? You think perhaps that I am *innamorato*. Yes, I am in love, but it is only with her voice. As a woman, she will always

remain for me a pretty rustic, and nothing more. Had it been a tenor instead of a soprano I should have adopted the same kind of life which I am pursuing now. You must know that I have become ambitious. Some day I shall compose an opera, and this voice will be of use to me. In the meantime I cultivate it, and amuse myself. I will not deny that I make love to her; women have no gratitude. It is necessary to win their hearts to exercise empire over them. *L'amant est roi.* But do not fear, my dear friend. In playing for her heart, I run no risk of losing mine. The dice are loaded.

"I shall have the pleasure of seeing you tomorrow at the usual hour, when we will laugh together about this *bella storia.*

"EUGENIO."

This letter had been composed by the Signora Pinsuti, and delivered by her to Restoni to use as a last resource. It was so composed that it would not compromise the Baroness if it fell into another person's hands, and the handwriting of Eugenio had been imitated to perfection. It proved to Maddalena that he had been intimate with the

Baroness at the very time (for the letter was dated) when he had sworn never to see her again. It was the only oath she had ever exacted from him. She had often seen the Baroness, and she had felt proud that Eugenio had abandoned so magnificent a woman for her. But now how different it all appeared. He was a liar, a hypocrite, a traitor. He had adopted her from selfish, almost mercenary, motives; he had acted love to her for his amusement; he had pretended to give up a woman whom he was in the habit of visiting, to whom he ridiculed the poor girl who had been so simple as to love him.

But when could he have seen this woman? He spent his whole days with her. Then she shuddered:—it could have been only after they had parted for the night. While she, the simpleton, was sleeping calmly, dreaming perhaps of him, he was kissing this titled courtezan with the same lips which had just been pressed on hers. Her brain turned; she passed into one of those trances which have already been described. It arose before her eyes. Night—the moon hazy and green—a dark palace by the Arno—a light in one window—

a figure on the balcony—a rope ladder falling to the street—and then—and then—

She rose and mounted to her room, murmuring to herself, "It is all over now." She knelt before the Madonna, but for once she found that she could not pray. Thus her sweet memories were torn from her and scattered in the winds. Her life became a wilderness; all around her was sand; above her hung the Oath like a sword of fire in the sky. She looked around her, there was no hope, no escape: one refuge was offered her, and that was an abyss. But one may learn to languish for a change of woe. She sought marriage as some seek death—because it is uncertain.

CHAPTER XII.

ONE morning towards the end of July, Lorini and Jenoure paid the Baroness a visit. She hated Jenoure as women always hate the man who has much influence over a lover or a husband; and she pretended to be very fond of him, as in such cases the dear creatures always do.

"Baroness," said Jenoure, "I have to announce that the season is at its last gasp. The Park is already thinned; the last subscription night is *affiché* on the walls; cards no longer circulate; one can only get invited to a country-house or a moor. Baroness, what do you intend to do?"

"I have taken a villa at Baden."

"Delightful coincidence: I am going there to."

"And you, Marchese?" asked the Baroness.

"I have not made up my mind yet, but I think

I shall accompany Jenoure." (He had already arranged to meet her there.)

"You cannot do better. Baden is delightful, is it not, Mr. Jenoure?"

"A perfect paradise. The poet can exist on its scenery, the scholar on its Roman antiquities, the rake on its dissipations. The society there is charming. As for myself, I visit it this time as artist and philosopher. I am making studies for a series of paintings, which I shall call the Passions."

"You will find plenty of materials there. You are yawning, Marchese!"

"Who does not yawn in this country at the end of July?" said Jenoure. "The season is a splendid, but wearying performance."

"I am not sorry that it is over," said Lorini. "I have tasted some new sensations, but society here has one serious fault: it is too large."

"It is a perfumed chaos," said the Baroness.

"And then its terrible formality. I have often regretted our little Florence, with its quiet visits in the *prima sera*, its chats in the crush-room, and its Cascine where one can go up to every carriage."

"You will like Baden. There we shall have our

own coterie as in Florence, but it is more amusing and absolutely *sans gêne.*"

"Yet, after all," said Jenoure, "it is only a ray from Paris, the sun of the civilized world."

"It is a ray which falls through a stained-glass window."

"*Stained*-glass!" precisely, Baroness; "and sometimes broken, is it not?"

"I have never been to Paris," said Lorini, "except in passing through."

"Ah, the monde at Paris," cried Jenoure. "What a life that is. They do not give you so much to eat and drink as they do here, and the women are not so pretty; but they *are* women, and not a set of stupid, vain, selfish, cold-blooded, dancing girls, who hate superior men because they cannot understand them, and take up with those whose ignorance flatters theirs."

"I agree with you, Mr. Jenoure. Many of the fashionable belles here would be much better in the nursery or at school."

"If a season costs as much in Paris as it does here, I shall be *throttled,*" said Lorini.

"It is terrible, is it not?" replied the Baroness.

"I do not wonder now that the English only come to London for three months in the year. Look at these bills (she opened a desk), Storr and Mortimer's, 2000*l.*; Howell and James', 400*l.*; Elise, 1000*l.*; Marshall and Snelgrove's, 600*l.*; then there will be my hotel bill; two carriage horses which I bought here, and my little accounts for gloves, boots, and other trifles. But you, Marchese, will have a resource at Baden, which the convenances refuse to me. You can play."

"Oh, nobody ever wins at those tables. Besides, I have such atrocious luck. I intend to put aside a thousand francs or so, consider it spent upon a pleasure, and amuse myself with it while it lasts."

"A very wise resolution, if you can adhere to it," said Jenoure.

The Russian valet announced that the carriage was at the door. The visitors rose and shook hands. The Baroness giving Lorini a kind of masonic grip.

"Mon cher," said Jenoure, as they lounged across the square, "have you observed that man's face?"

"What man's face?"

"The Russian's."

"The servant, do you mean? No, not particularly."

"Have you not noticed that he comes in very soon after the bell is rung?"

"Yes, he always stands outside the door."

"Do you know anything about him?"

"Nothing; except that he is an old family servant."

"How long is it since he left the army?"

"I did not know that he had been a soldier."

"Oh, yes, that is evident. One can always tell a drilled man. The Baroness puts a great deal of confidence in him, does she not?"

"I am sure I don't know; I dare say that she does," said Lorini, looking at his friend with rather a surprised face.

"What are you going to do now?"

"I have an engagement at three o'clock."

"Oh, yes, that mysterious engagement."

"But we will spend the evening together, if you like."

"Unhappily, I have an engagement too."

"Also mysterious?"

"Also mysterious."

"Also a lady in the case?"

"Also a lady in the case."

"A lady that I know?"

"Yes, a lady that you know very well."

"Then I will ask no question," said Lorini, magnanimously.

He went to meet the Baroness in obedience to the manual invitation which he had received. The carriage, as usual, was waiting in the next street. "Olga," said he, "I fear that you place yourself at the mercy of your servants in coming here."

"Bah!" she said; "it does not matter. I am like the sultanas who surround themselves with mutes. The coachman and the valet are both Russians; neither of them speak English. But if I received you often at the hotel, the waiters would tell the footmen of people who come there; the footmen would tell the femmes-de-chambre, and they would tell their mistresses. That would never do. People may infer what they please as long as they can establish nothing. Talking of servants, I have taken a French maid who has just left the service of—now guess who it is?"

"Maddalena Restoni?"

"You have guessed aright. Do you know anything of the girl?"

"No; except that she always seemed quick and attentive."

Eugenio felt her lips smile as she gave him a kiss. Had Julie already told her anything?

Jenoure had been invited to a house in Bedford Square. Atkins had retired. This was his farewell party. He had filled his rooms with commercial and artistic friends. The Stock Exchange and the Stage ran parallel with each other there, and did not meet. They mingled, but without amalgamation. Certain amphibious characters passed from one tribe to the other, pointing out millionaires for the envy of the artists, and small celebrities for the curiosity of the men of business. There were but few ladies present, and they had come chiefly to hear Restoni sing.

Jenoure went in very late. He walked through the rooms, muttering to himself, "I see nobody here but the giants of Mincing Lane and the dwarfs of the Craven. Ah, there is Darlington."

The doctor shook off Chuckleigh, who had been

extracting from him matter for an article on a late case of poisoning, and came to Jenoure.

"What, you here, Darlington?"

"I was brought in by a man I dined with. When does it come off?"

"To-morrow."

"To-morrow!"

"Yes; and he had the impudence to ask me to be his best man. I have suffered enough in the sacred cause of friendship, as it is."

"Show me Atkins. We missed him when we came in."

"He is standing by the piano, casting sheep's eyes at his betrothed. There, now he is putting his hand to his head. Why, how you stare! If you were Lorini you could not look at him with more interest."

"It is pathological."

"Really."

"You are a physiognomist, Jenoure. Examine that man's face. Do you not observe a peculiar bloated appearance of the lips, a livid tint in the complexion, a glassy look in the eyes?"

"Yes; what does that denote?"

"Ah! you will be sorry some day for having helped, however slightly, to marry that poor girl with him."

"I did it to rescue a beloved friend from misery," said Jenoure, clasping his hands. "The means justify the end—what is it to be?"

"Can anything justify what you and others have done? You found two young creatures happy—you have made them miserable."

"Yes; Lorini is very miserable with his Baroness."

"Do you think that he is happy, because he has exchanged a pure love for a wretched intrigue? Do you think——"

"My dear Darlington, I think that you are very tiresome. I asked you for a clinical lecture, not a sermon. What I have done, I have done. If Lorini had really loved this girl, I could not have prevented him from lying down in the dirt to please her. If she had really loved him, she would not have consented to marry this golden calf. Lorini had for this girl a caprice which had hardened into a habit; he never really loved her. However, if she had come to him after that quarrel he would have married her

out of generosity. But she preferred to be filial, and a sweet choice she has made."

"Good evening, signori," said Restoni, coming up to them, with Maddalena on his arm. His face was full of contained joy, while hers resembled that of a corpse.

Jenoure to Restoni. All has been arranged, eh?

Restoni. All has been arranged, signore.

Jenoure (with undisguised contempt). You have bled him well, no doubt.

Restoni (with an indescribable look). The Signor Atkins has been very generous.

Darlington to Maddalena. Dear girl, remember what I have told you. You will always find a friend in me.

Maddalena (her eyes filled with tears). God bless you, sir!"

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